ADDIE GRAVES (1922-2007) AND THE CREATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH IN COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

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Abstract

Addie Graves (1922-2007) grew up in Wilcox County, Alabama, which at the time was a center of Lutheran African-American missions. After moving to Columbus, Georgia, in the early 1950s, she became the first black member of a Lutheran church in the city (Lutheran Church of the Redeemer). This is significant because most other churches in Columbus did not desegregate until decades later. It was also prior to any official desegregation action by the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. She could have joined a different church, but she evidently felt strongly about her Lutheran faith and identity. In 1963, she helped establish Bethlehem Lutheran Church in her neighborhood, seeking to spread the gospel and benefit her neighbors. She did this, not out of an identification with Black Lutheranism, but because of her confessional, theologically conservative Lutheran faith.

INDEX WORDS: Lutheranism, Race and Ethnicity, Civil Rights, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Columbus, Georgia

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements iv

Introduction 1

Chapter One: *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story* 15

Chapter Two: Born in the Center of Black Lutheranism (Wilcox County, Alabama) 29

Chapter Three: "A Devout Lutheran" 37

Chapter Four: Bethlehem Lutheran Church 60

Bibliography 77

Introduction

On March 14, 2013, Congressman Sanford Bishop recognized Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Columbus, Georgia, on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary: "The story of Bethlehem Lutheran Church is a truly inspiring one of the dedication and perseverance of a faithful congregation of people."[1] He also gave a brief historical overview of the church, saying its members "have positively contributed to the spiritual maturation and personal development of those in the Columbus, Georgia, metropolitan area and beyond."[2] Begun as a black mission in 1963, Bethlehem is still predominantly a black congregation and its members still consider it a black Lutheran mission. The church was founded because of a woman named Addie Graves (1922-2007), who, for a decade before she helped establish Bethlehem, had attended the previously all-white Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (also in Columbus). Bethlehem, which began as an "experiment," was really the result of racism. As time went on, Graves experienced increasing racism and prejudice at Redeemer. Yet this was not simply a case of racism at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer; it was a symptom of a larger issue of identity within American Lutheranism.[3]

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[1] Congressman Sanford Bishop, "In Recognition of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church's 50th Anniversary," 113th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* 159, no. 37 (March 14, 2013): E302. Congressman Bishop represents Georgia's 2nd congressional district, which covers the southwestern portion of the state of Georgia, including south Columbus.

[2] Ibid.

[3] "No matter what delicate, cautious words were used to describe it, the problem was racism in the church." Samuel L. Hoard, *The Truth Will Set You Free* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004), 40. Deanna A. Thompson discussed the fact that Lutherans have historically had an issue with race and identity in Thompson, "Calling a Thing What It Is: A Lutheran Approach to Whiteness," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 49-57; cf. Barbara J. Fields, "Whiteness, Racism, and Identity," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 60 (Fall 2001): 48-56. See also Kathryn M. Galchutt, "Lutherans and Race: In the Vanguard or Behind the Times?" *Lutheran Education Journal* 141, no. 2 (2007): 89-101.

Addie Graves grew up in Wilcox County, Alabama, the location of several mission schools set up by Rosa Young, a schoolteacher who, during a time of economic hardship, had reached out to and worked with the Lutheran church to create dozens of congregations in rural Alabama.[4] Graves attended one of those schools and grew up practicing the Lutheran faith.[5] For her it was only a matter of faith to join the only Lutheran church in town after she moved to Columbus, Georgia, in the late 1940s. There was no fanfare when she began attending the church. There was also likely no difficulty on her part, relatively speaking, given the Missouri Synod's history to that point. But after a decade, the pressures of segregation intensified and Graves took an opportunity to help create Bethlehem as a black mission church.

This thesis argues that Black Lutheranism was not Addie Graves's motivation, her reasoning, or even her perspective when she helped Reverend Robert H. Collins form Bethlehem Lutheran Church in the early 1960s. Even though she had experienced firsthand the kind of repression and suffering that later black Lutherans would refer to as a defining characteristic of Black Lutheranism, she was motivated rather by her traditional, theologically conservative Lutheran faith.[6] Through years of racial unrest in Columbus, and a period of theological turmoil in the Missouri Synod, when many black Lutherans affiliated with more liberal brands of

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[4] Rosa Young's autobiography, *Light in the Dark Belt: The Story of Rosa Young as Told by Herself*, rev. ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950) provides great detail about the beginnings of Lutheran schools and churches in central Alabama. For more context, see Walter H. Ellwanger, "Lutheranism in Alabama and Other Parts of the South," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 48 (Summer 1975): 35-43, and Theodore G. Ahrendt, *The Lutherans in Georgia: An Informal History from Spain to the Space Age* (Chicago: Adams Press, 1979).

[5] About the black mission context in which Graves grew up, one author stated, "There was [sic] created…true Lutherans and not just black Lutherans." James Shrader, "Black Theology and History and Issues within the Black Ministry of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod," (paper, Orthodox Lutheran Confessional Conference Convention, August 4-5, 2016), 13.

[6] Graves did, in fact, meet most criteria for Black Lutheranism, as she had "been denied full participation in the dominant culture despite the fact that [she had] accepted and internalized the values of the dominant culture." Albert Pero, "On Being Black, Lutheran, and American in a Racist Society," in *Theology and the Black Experience: The Lutheran Heritage Interpreted by African & African-American Theologians*, ed. Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 165; the "dominant culture" in this case being Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Lutheranism, Graves held on to her confessional Lutheran faith. Though not the image of a typical civil rights activist, she emerged as one nonetheless. In doing exactly what she desired in the face of white Lutheran oppression (i.e., participating as much as she could at Redeemer), she struck a blow for equality. And her traditional, theologically conservative Lutheran faith does not detract from that fact. A black woman as a conservative Lutheran is a departure from other histories concerning black Lutherans, which tend to focus on liberal theology and progressive social work.

Black Lutheranism can be described as Black Liberation Theology within the Lutheran tradition. After the late 1960s, when black power and liberation theology influenced American society, black Lutherans, pastors and laymen, began a much more intense dialogue through the 1970s about the meaning of being black and Lutheran.[7] In 1968, at the urging of Albert Pero, a group of black Lutherans from multiple Lutheran organizations met in Chicago to form the Association of Black Lutheran Churchmen.[8] After that organization "died" in 1972, Pero and others continued to develop and express their views on Black Lutheranism.[9] But Black Lutheranism is more than blacks as Lutherans.[10] According to Pero, the presence of Black Lutheranism "is due to the failure of Christian theologians to relate the gospel of Christ to the pain and suffering of being black in racist…societies which include Lutherans."[11] Although

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[7] This same dialogue occurred in other denominations as well (see, e.g., "Blacks Organize Units in Churches," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, August 17, 1968).
[8] Jeff G. Johnson, *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 203.
[9] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 204.
[10] See Daniel W. Pezzica, "The History and Theology of the [sic] African American Lutheranism from 1669-1969" (master's thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, 2008).
[11] Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo, "Preface," in *Theology and the Black Experience,* ed. Albert Pero and Ambrose Moyo, 9-10. I shortened this because you already cited the book on the previous page.

some historians have connected "Black Theology and the Black Ministry within the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod," not all black Lutherans have identified with Black Lutheranism.[12]

A widely held misconception is that Lutherans, prior to the twentieth century, had had little or no contact with black people in North America.[13] That misunderstanding stems from the fact—still true today—that the majority of American Lutherans are of northern European descent, specifically German or Scandinavian. Even as late as the early decades of the twentieth century, many Lutherans in America were immigrants themselves.[14] The mistaken belief, and continued stereotype, then, is that Lutheran immigrants, once in America, banded together in ethnic enclaves set apart from the mainstream population.[15] Under this model, it is logical to assume there would have been little interaction with the black population in America. But this is simply untrue. In areas with black populations, Lutherans interacted with them as much as other Americans did, even welcoming them into their congregations.

Black Lutherans have been in North America for over three centuries – longer than many European immigrants whom we generally identify with Lutheranism. Theirs is "a legacy too long ignored."[16] African Americans also comprise the largest minority within the Lutheran church in America.[17] But they feature very little in the overall history of American Lutheranism. Both black clergy and black lay members have played important roles within the Lutheran church and

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[12] e.g., Shrader, "Black Theology and History," 4; Pezzica explained the effect of conservative Lutheran theology on Black Lutherans. Pezzica, "The History and Theology," 42-62.

[13] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 16.

[14] It was not until 1917 that the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod dropped the word "German" from its official title. Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 439.

[15] See, e.g., Gregory P. Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context: Engaging Conian Black Theology Through Strategic Lutheran Missiology" (PhD diss., Concordia Seminary, 2017).

[16] Mark Granquist, "A Legacy Too Long Ignored," *Metro Lutheran*, May 3, 2010, http://metrolutheran.org/2010/05/a-legacy-too-long-ignored/.

[17] Incidentally, currently more than twice as many Lutherans reside in Africa than in North America. Mark Noll, "A Good Time for Looking Back," *Lutheran Quarterly* 29 (2015): 322.

in larger American society since the first Lutherans arrived in the early seventeenth century.[18] These two groups (clergy and laypeople) have received different amounts of attention by scholars.

The topic of black Lutherans is "an understudied subject."[19] Much of the research in this area has been done from a denominational (i.e., synodical) perspective or scope.[20] Jeff G. Johnson noted that "[m]any researchers have been preoccupied with the extent to which their particular denomination has succeeded in transmitting or imposing its religious forms on black people."[21] This thesis concentrates on black Lutherans within the Missouri Synod. But, in keeping with Johnson's purpose, the intent is to recognize black Lutherans as historical actors. The Missouri Synod celebrated the life of Rosa Young with the 2014 release of *The First Rosa* (an allusion to Rosa Parks), which summarized her role as the "Mother of Black Lutheranism."[22] Hers is but one story of an exemplary black Lutheran.[23] But her story, and that of Addie Graves, fit into a larger context of a group of traditional, theologically conservative Lutherans.

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[18] James Kenneth Echols, "Lutheranism," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, ed. Jack Salzman, et al. (New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996), 1667.

[19] Mark Granquist, editor's note to Milton C. Sernett, "Lutherans and African Americans," *Journal of the Lutheran Historical Conference* (2014): 279.

[20] Roosevelt Gray, the Director of Black Ministry of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, wrote that the history of black Lutheranism "is recorded in four books." Roosevelt Gray, "The History of LCMS Mercy Work with African Americans," *Reporter: Official Newspaper of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod*, updated February 20, 2018, https://blogs.lcms.org/2018/history-lcms-mercy-work-african-americans/, 1. The four books, according to Gray, are Nils J. Bakke, *Illustrated Historical Sketch of Our Colored Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1914); Christopher F. Drewes, *Half a Century of Lutheranism Among our Colored People* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1927); Rosa Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*; and Richard C. Dickinson, Ros*es and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Mission and Ministry in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod*(St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977).

[21] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 17.

[22] Ardon Albrecht, dir. *The First Rosa: Teacher, Confessor, Church Planter* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 2015), DVD. The use of "Black Lutheranism" here is fundamentally different than the use by Pero and others.

[23] One of the few biographies of Rosa Young is Julieanna Frost, "Teaching the Pure Gospel: The Life of Rosa Jinsey Young" (PhD diss., Union Institute and University, 2007).

Though there had been Lutherans in North America from the earliest days of European colonization in America, the most significant group (as far as this thesis is concerned) immigrated in the mid-nineteenth century. Escaping different movements in Europe at the time, including rationalism and religious unionism, and clinging to a strict adherence to the Lutheran Confessions, a group of Saxons eventually made their way to St. Louis, Missouri, where in 1847 they started the *German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States*.[24] Because of their strict confessionalism, and their recent immigration from Europe, the Missouri Synod Lutherans remained insular in many ways, including their use of the German language, into the twentieth century.[25]

While American Lutherans had attempted many times to evangelize black Americans, the Synodical Conference initiated the most significant effort in 1877. Formed when the Missouri Synod joined with a handful of other conservative Lutheran synods in 1872, the Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America lasted until the mid-twentieth century as a theologically conservative body. When the Synodical Conference cut ties with mission societies in Germany on theological grounds, they turned to blacks in the southern states as a "foreign mission." This new mission led to a dramatic growth in the number of black Lutherans in the United States through the first decades of the twentieth century, but from the start it was hampered by some significant "hurdles."

Matt Krenke cited two "hurdles" in the black mission work of the Synodical Conference: "poor planning" and "mistaken views held by flawed humans."[26] He and Johnson both noted that

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[24] Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers*, 142ff. This synod is commonly called the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). A *synod* is an organized group of churches, in the case of Lutherans, a group of churches in fellowship.
[25] Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context," 23-24.
[26] Matt Krenke, "Out of the Blocks: Hurdles Encountered in the Synodical Conference's Mission to Black Americans" (student paper, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2001), 12, http://wlsessays.net/handle/123456789/2719.

the Synodical Conference's failure to recognize that other white Lutherans had done mission work among America's black population caused some problems in the conference's mission work for its first few decades. As Krenke put it, "[t]heir attitude was entirely one of 'enlightening' these black heathens, failing to recognize that there were possibly Christians among the former slaves of the South."[27] This leads to the next point – that the view of the Synodical Conference toward black mission work and of black Lutherans was one of paternalism. James Shrader noticed a stark contrast between early works, which emphasize "Christ and His saving work for all mankind," and later works (of the second half of the twentieth century) that stress black empowerment. For example, he contrasted Christopher Drewes's *Half a Century* and Richard C. Dickinson's *Roses and Thorns*, noting that "Dickinson says that Drewes' history was written from the 'white perspective' and that his history is done exclusively from the 'black perspective.'"[28]

Eurocentrism, and particularly German-centrism, was another major hurdle to missions by American Lutherans, who considered the mission to black Americans as a foreign mission.[29] Dickinson, in *Roses and Thorns*, wrote that it is even "hard for a white person, who is not German, to feel fully at home in the denominational structures of our church."[30] As C.F.W. Walther, the leader of the Missouri Synod, wrote in 1869 regarding the idea of black ministry, "It will be difficult to begin mission work among the 'colored people' as long as we have not more

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[27] Krenke, "Out of the Blocks," 1.
[28] Shrader, "Black Theology and History," 13.
[29] Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context," 23; Scott C. Mund, "Heterogeneous Ideal: Education of Minority Students for Ministry in the Wisconsin Synod" (student paper, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1998), 18-19, http://essays.wls.wels.net/handle/123456789/3389; Krenke, "Out of the Blocks." Importantly, however, Nils J. Bakke, one of the most prolific missionaries to the African American population, was a Norwegian.
[30] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 195.

men who are conversant with the English language."[31] Eventually black pastors trained by the Synodical Conference would learn German so that they could more fully participate in the life of a pastor of a German-centric synodical organization.[32] Samuel L Hoard, a black Lutheran pastor wrote: "I felt that if I could communicate with German-speaking people, I might be able to change some false thinking about black people."[33] By the late twentieth century, however, many black Lutherans grew weary of the expected conformity with German-ness. They no longer wanted the definition of a "good black Lutheran" to mean one had to be a "good black German."[34] This did not mean that they all then identified with Black Lutheranism. On the contrary, many black Lutherans, because of the strict confessional nature of the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, held on to a theological conservatism, as did Addie Graves.[35]

Early twentieth-century Lutheran historian Abdel Ross Wentz, in his *Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (1955), made an effort to show that the "Lutheran church in America is an integral and potent part of American Christianity."[36] He was combating the idea that Lutherans were an ethnic sect or an immigrant church.[37] Having lived through two world wars, a period that witnessed anti-German sentiments in the United States, Wentz clearly showed the Lutheran church's long history in America: "It is as old as the American nation and much older

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[31] C.F.W. Walther to F. Sievers, 1869, quoted in Gray, "The History of LCMS Mercy Work with African Americans," 1. Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era*, Publications of the German Historical Institute (New York: Cambridge, 2013), gives a broader context to German immigrants' attitudes toward African Americans in the nineteenth century.
[32] Examples include Marmaduke Carter and Samuel Hoard. See Hoard, *The Truth Will Set You Free*, 68-69.
[33] Hoard, *The Truth Will Set You Free*, 69.
[34] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 196.
[35] Luebke addressed "The Immigrant Condition as a Factor Contributing to the Conservatism of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod," in *Germans in the New World: Essays in the History of Immigration*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 1-13. This thesis shows, through the examples of Rosa Young and Addie Graves, that black Lutherans within conservative Lutheranism tended to stay as such.
[36] Abdel Ross Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), v.
[37] Cf. "The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod is, in fact, an ethnic church body." Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 195.

than the American republic."[38] He also argued that "[t]he people in the Lutheran churches in the land are a constituent and typical element of the American nation."[39] However, because of this German heritage and continuing identification, and a strict confessional identity, some scholars have tended to ethnicize the Missouri Synod.[40] Mark A. Noll, in "The Lutheran Difference," pointed out that Lutherans, because of the Two Kingdoms doctrine, remained socially and politically isolated until after World War II.[41] An example of that isolation is the non-involvement of the Missouri Synod with the Federal Council of Churches, which, in 1948, adopted a statement on human rights.[42]

The German-centrism of the Missouri Synod Lutherans was not the only obstacle to black mission work and eventual acceptance of black parishioners. The other major issue has been the Lutheran doctrine of Two Kingdoms – the idea that the spiritual realm and the physical realm are exclusive.[43] This doctrine of two kingdoms was applied historically to address slavery and abolition. Walther and others taught that slavery was not necessarily an issue Lutherans should contend with, but to be sure they treated their own slaves well. Lutherans cared for the spiritual well-being of black slaves, but left their physical well-being to the world.[44] Lutherans still used Two Kingdoms as an argument one hundred years later, during the Civil Rights

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[38] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, v.
[39] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, v. Johnson noted that "professional historians seem to have had a hand in perpetuating…the myth that Euro-American Lutherans have had very little contact with black people. Therefore, one should not expect to find many blacks who are members of the Lutheran Church. Johnson, *Black Christians*, 16.
[40] Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context," 21.
[41] Mark A. Noll, "The Lutheran Difference," *First Things* 20 (February 1992), 31-40. Even into the 1950s, some Lutheran congregations still used the German Language in Sunday services. Hoard, *The Truth Will Set You Free,* 69; Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context," 24.
[42] Gene Zubovich, "For Human Rights Abroad, Against Jim Crow at Home: The Political Mobilization of American Ecumenical Protestants in the World War II Era," *Journal of American History* 105, no. 2 (September 2018): 267-290.
[43] Seltz., "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context," 213.
[44] Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context," 82-83.

Movement. A. T. Kretzmann, in a conference paper delivered in 1970, discussed how to address the "issue" of race relations."[45] He argued that segregation was "an *adiaphoron* (an observance neither forbidden nor commanded)" in the Bible.[46] "We hold that segregation, wholly or in part, is not in itself sinful."[47] Herald E. Winkler addressed the same issue as it played out in South Africa, showing that it was not unique to America.[48]

Another issue that has plagued Lutheran black mission work is that for many white Lutherans urbanization has been synonymous with black mission work. Gregory Seltz discussed this at length, and in fact saw Black Liberation Theology as a way to change the mindset of urban Lutheran missionaries when dealing with the liberalism – socially and theologically – which exists in urban environments.[49] Although she moved to Columbus, Addie Graves was not raised in an urban environment. She grew up in the context of Rosa Young's black missions in rural Wilcox County, Alabama. That context was one of traditional, confessional Lutheranism.

This study brings together two different worlds: that of a black Lutheran woman who grew up in Alabama, secure in her identity, and a broader, modernizing, racially divided progressive world. This story took place in the American South, a place with its unique identity and its own problems and issues, especially regarding race relations.[50] Southern historians have

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[45] A. T. Kretzmann, "Race Relations," (paper, Southeastern Wisconsin District Chicago Conference, Niles, Illinois, November 10, 1970). See also Scott Henrich, "Race and the Lutheran Pastor" (master's thesis, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2018).
[46] Kretzman, "Race Relations," 1.
[47] Kretzman, "Race Relations," 1.
[48] Harald E. Winkler, "The Divided Roots of Lutheranism in South Africa: A Critical Overview of the Social History of the German-speaking Lutheran Missions and the Churches Originating from their Work in South Africa" (PhD diss., University of Cape Town, 1989).
[49] One of the most recent works in this area is Gregory P. Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context."
[50] Two books which provide a different perspective (i.e., not LCMS) on Lutheranism during the 1950s include Alf M. Kraabel, *Grace and Race in the Lutheran Church* (Chicago: National Lutheran Council, 1957); Ervin E. Krebs, *The Lutheran Church and the Negro in America* (Columbus, Ohio: Board of American Mission of the American Lutheran Church, 1950).

addressed the topics of racism and Jim Crow segregation and themes of identity, heritage, and otherness.[51] Others focus on those themes within the state of Georgia.[52] Graves's case is significant for Columbus, Georgia, which exhibits somewhat of a collective loss of memory about the Civil Rights Era.[53] The Columbus context is also important, because most other churches in Columbus did not desegregate until the 1970s (or even later).[54]

Lutheranism during the Civil Rights Movement presents an interesting case, partly due to the apathy on the part of some Lutherans because of the Two Kingdoms doctrine, but more so because of the heavy and significant involvement of other Lutherans in the Civil Rights Movement. The story of the desegregation of the Lutheran church in the American South has not been adequately told.[55] Nor has the broader issue of race relations in Lutheran churches been

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[51] James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999).

[52] Stephen G.N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia,* ed. Jonathan Grant (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993); John C. Inscoe, ed. *Georgia in Black and White: Explorations in the Race Relations of a Southern State, 1865-1950* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

[53] Part of the unique history of Columbus is a late desegregation of its school district. Virginia Causey, "The Long and Winding Road: School Desegregation in Columbus, Georgia, 1963-1997," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (Fall 2001): 398-434. See also Earnestine Ridenour, "Thomas H. Brewer and the Struggle for Human Rights," (Specialist project, Columbus College, 1990), Columbus State University Collection (MC 5), Columbus State University Archives; Judith Grant, *Columbus, Georgia* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000); Liza Benham, *The Road from Bondage: A Local Black History* (Columbus, GA: Columbus Ledger-Enquirer, 1982); John W. Townsend, Extraordinary Courage: My Life on the Columbus College Campus (1963-1965) (Self-published, 2013); and Danielle Melissovas Thompson, *Can Two Walk Together?* (Columbus, Georgia: PDL Ventures, 2009), DVD.

[54] William W. Winn, *Line of Splendor: The Life and Times of St. Luke United Methodist Church, Columbus, Georgia, 1828-2008* (Columbus, GA: St. Luke United Methodist Church, 2010); *Brightening the Corner Where We Are: The First Fifty Years of Edgewood Presbyterian Church, Columbus, Georgia, 1952-2001* (Columbus, GA: Brentwood Publishing Company, 2002). See also Jessica Stephens, "The Standoff: First Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Georgia, Robert McNeill, and Racial Equality" (master's thesis, Auburn University, 2011). See also Donald E. Collins, *When the Church Bell Rang Racist: The Methodist Church and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); Andrew Michael Manis, *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Black and White Baptists and Civil Rights, 1947-1957* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); Gardiner H. Schattuck, *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); Mark Newman, "Desegregation of the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, 1950-1974," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 112, no. 1/2 (January-April 2011): 26-49.

[55] See Gregory Freeland, "Lutherans and the Southern Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 6, no. 11 (November 2006), https://www.elca.org/JLE/Articles/557.

fully examined. Notable Lutherans in the Civil Rights Movement include Dr. Joseph Ellwanger, who chaired the group Concerned White Citizens of Alabama and Will Herzfeld, president of the SCLC in Alabama, both of whom marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Another leader was Andrew Schulze, the Executive Secretary of the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America.[56] Yet, these are all well-known (they made the news headlines in their day) men. Graves's case is different in that she was not a pastor, nor was she on the front page of the newspaper.[57]

This thesis provides a narrative of the life and church involvement of Addie Graves in the context of Lutheran black missions and Jim Crow history. Sources of data for this study include church records, though, to borrow a line from a local church history, "[t]he obtainable information is lacking in many details."[58] Biographical details were obtained from census records and newspapers. The greatest sources of information have been interviews of Addie Graves's daughters and niece, church members who knew her, and former pastors of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. I also visited churches in Wilcox County, Alabama, and Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Columbus, Georgia. Anniversary booklets produced by Redeemer Lutheran Church over the years provided a narrative outline. Records of the local Lutheran churches in Columbus

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[56] Kathryn M. Galchutt's recent work, *The Career of Andrew Schulze, 1924-1968: Lutherans and Race in the Civil Rights Era* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005) is the best on the subject. Schulze also wrote his own work, Andrew Schulze, *Race Against Time: A History of Race Relations in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod from the Perspective of the Author's Involvement, 1920-1970* (Valparaiso, IN: Lutheran Human Relations Association of America, 1972). Autobiographies by white pastors who served among black Lutherans during the mid-twentieth century include Andrew Schulze, *My Neighbor of Another Color: A Treatise on Race Relations in the Church* (St. Louis: Self-pub, 1941); Robert S. Graetz, *A White Preacher's Memoir: The Montgomery Bus Boycott* (Montgomery: Black Belt Press, 1998), originally published as *Montgomery: A White Preacher's Memoir* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991); and Karl E. Lutze, *Awakening to Equality: A Young Pastor at the Dawn of Civil Rights* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006).

[57] For another work about "local people," see John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

[58] Lillian D. Champion, "Foreword," in *History of Bethany Baptist Church, Pine Mountain, Georgia 1828-1978* (Pine Mountain, Georgia: Bethany Baptist Church, 1978).

are housed at the respective churches: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, and the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer.

This thesis is an attempt to illuminate and retell the story of one particular Lutheran, a black woman named Addie Graves, who without fanfare integrated a congregation in Columbus, Georgia, in 1952. One of the guiding questions was the extent to which the inclusionary spirit of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod allowed for Addie Graves to join an all-white church in Columbus, Georgia. Was desegregation in her case a smooth process? In addressing that question, two more arose: Was there something special about Lutherans that allowed desegregation to happen so much earlier than in other churches in Columbus? Or was Addie Graves a hero of the Civil Rights Era who broke through barriers and deserves recognition like Primus King and Dr. Thomas Brewer? Though the LCMS had had a half-century history of racial interactions and missions among blacks, the conditions present in the mid-twentieth century were a unique combination in which this story could develop.

The title of the first chapter is the title of Jeff Johnson's book *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story*. It provides necessary background for the twentieth century context of Graves's story. This background is two-fold. First, it explains the existence of blacks as Lutherans beyond the time from 1877 to Rosa Young's era in the early twentieth century. Second, it highlights the early history of Euro-Lutherans dealing with the issue of race in the church, particularly the impact of conservative, confessional immigrants on black Lutheran missions.

Chapter Two details the culture in which Addie Graves grew up and the Lutheran religion with which she was familiar before moving to Columbus. Two things are most important to note about Wilcox County, Alabama: its generally poor economic situation (which caused many to

leave, including Graves and her husband), and the prevalence and prominence of the Lutheran mission there. That Lutheran mission was a continuation of program of the conservative, confessional Lutherans in Chapter One.

The third chapter provides a brief history of Columbus in the first half of the twentieth century, including the establishment of the first Lutheran church there, the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer (ca. 1940), the importance of Fort Benning to the growth of Columbus, and the early growth of Redeemer. Fort Benning was also the reason Addie and John Graves moved to Columbus. The chapter also deals with early civil rights history in Columbus, the acceptance of Addie Graves as a member of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, and the barriers she faced. It also provides information about the situation of race relations in the LCMS during the first half of the twentieth century.

Chapter Four outlines the creation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Columbus, Georgia, as a black mission in 1963 – a process in which Graves became intimately involved. As we will see, the distinction between Bethlehem, which was begun by the Mission Board, and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, which was begun as a "daughter church" of Redeemer in 1966, is significant. Finally, this chapter discusses the end of Graves's life, her legacy, the recent history of LCMS Black Missions in the context of Black Lutheranism, and why she was not acting out of an identification with Black Lutheranism, but out of her traditional Lutheran identity.

This thesis contributes to the collective story of black lay people in the Lutheran church during the period under examination. This project sheds new light on the neglected issue of black Lutherans in Columbus, and adds to broader scholarly discussions about the intersection of race, religion, and society.

Chapter One: *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story*[59]

The main story of this thesis—that of Addie Graves and the origin of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Columbus, Georgia—took place within the system of mission work among the black population of the United States which the Synodical Conference and the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod began in 1877. This chapter provides historical context and relevant background information, which enable us to better understand Lutheranism in the twentieth century. It explains the long history of African American Lutherans, as well as some of the racial dynamics, including a shift from paternalism to partial autonomy, within American Lutheranism in the nineteenth century.[60] Lutheranism among African Americans, after earlier periods of growth, severely declined in the decades after the Civil War, but experienced a "rebirth" toward the end of the nineteenth century.[61] Importantly, it explains the impact of nineteenth century German immigration (of the Old Lutherans) on black Lutherans. Though some African Americans identified as Lutherans since the colonial period, this chapter will show how nineteenth century German immigration changed the course of black Lutheran history by reinvigorating it with a conservative confessional stance.

From the day they set foot on American soil after their journey from Europe, Lutherans were confronted with the American issue of black slavery. In the early period, Lutherans, like members of other denominations, did not hold uniform views toward the issue. Some, like

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[59] The title of this chapter is the title of Jeff Johnson's book, *Black Christians: The Untold Lutheran Story* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991).

[60] Abdel Ross Wentz argued that Lutherans "are a constituent and typical element of the American nation." Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, v. While this statement is true (if rather bland) in a broad sense, it leaves out black Lutherans, who could neither fully participate in American politics, nor fully participate in the life of the Lutheran church until the twentieth century.

[61] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 151.

Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus (reigned 1611-1632), were opposed to slave labor. Adolphus reasoned that his planned colony along the Delaware River would be more prosperous "with wives and children" than it would be with the use of slave labor.[62] Some Lutherans had no problems with slavery, and others, after being influenced by their neighbors in America, changed their opinions over time. One thing remained constant—Lutherans showed concern for the spiritual welfare of African Americans. Even in the early period, they involved Africans and African Americans in congregational worship activities, whether they were slaves or not. Church records give plenty of evidence of the inclusion of both enslaved and free African Americans in congregational activities.[63]

The earliest recorded instance of a black person baptized in a Lutheran church in America was on April 13, 1669, when Reverend Jacob Fabritius, pastor of a Dutch community on the Hudson River in New York, baptized a free black man named Emmanuel.[64] Aree and Jora van Guinee, two free black Lutherans who were charter members at the organization of the first Lutheran church in New Jersey, had their granddaughter baptized on August 1, 1714.[65] In one instance, a Lutheran pastor who led a black man convicted of murder to faith, also baptized him and administered the sacrament of communion to him prior to his execution.[66]

Though most Lutherans were opposed to the slave trade, many were not opposed to slave ownership. This perspective was not unique among new Lutheran immigrants in America, but, as one historian stated, "for most Lutheran people the question of slavery was theoretical."[67] "Any

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[62] Israel Acrelius, *A History of New Sweden* (Philadelphia: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1874), viii, quoted in Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Racism and the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1994), 18. (Hereafter abbreviated as CTCR.)
[63] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, 56.
[64] Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 74.
[65] Echols, "Lutheranism," 1667.
[66] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, 56.
[67] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, 161.

religious scruples they may have had against slavery as an institution were often outweighed by economic considerations."[68] Oftentimes this happened when Lutherans moved from Pennsylvania, for example, to the southern states, where slavery was more prevalent.[69]

In the famous case of the Salzburgers, a group of about three hundred Lutherans exiled in 1731 by count Leopold von Firmian, the archbishop of Salzburg, they changed their position over time. After their initial exile to England, because of the Salzburgers' opposition to slavery the trustees of the English colony of Georgia found them appealing and allowed them to move there. The Trustees originally prohibited slavery, considering it both unnecessary and expensive (for the Trustees), as well as a liability for the security of the colony.[70] After establishing their settlement at Ebenezer, the three hundred Salzburgers, led by the Reverend Johann Martin Boltzius, signed an agreement to reject slavery. Within a few years of their arrival, however, Boltzius discovered that one of the colonists secretly kept slaves. Georgia colonists, including some Salzburgers, eventually petitioned the Trustees, requesting permission to use slaves.[71] Influenced by the existence of slavery in other English colonies, they claimed slave labor was a necessity.[72]

The issue became a point of contention within the Lutheran community at Ebenezer, until 1750, when Boltzius—who had held to his opposition to slavery—finally resolved to allow

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[68] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, 56-57.
[69] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, 57.
[70] Benjamin Martyn, *An Account Shewing the Progress of the Colony of Georgia in America from Its First Establishment*, in Trevor R. Reese, ed., *The Clamorous Malcontents: Criticisms and Defenses of the Colony of Georgia, 1741-1743* (Savannah: The Beehive Press, 1973), 190-192, excerpted in Thomas A. Scott, ed., *Cornerstones of Georgia History: Documents that Formed the State* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 29-31.
[71] Andrew C. Lannen, "Liberty and Slavery in Colonial America: The Case of Georgia, 1732-1770," *The Historian* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 32-55.
[72] Conrad Bergendoff, *The Church of the Lutheran Reformation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), 191; CTCR, *Racism and the Church*, 19, esp. note 42 and 43; Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 57.

slavery. Boltzius based his decision upon a message he received from his mentor in Germany, Reverend Samuel Urlsperger: "If you take slaves in faith, and with the intent of conducting them to Christ, the action will not be a sin, but may prove a benediction."[73] The Salzburgers were one of the last remaining settlement groups that still supported the Trustees' anti-slavery ideal. In the years leading up to 1750, the Trustees yielded to the desires of Georgia colonists, and finally asked the House of Commons to change the law, thus lifting the ban. This went into effect on January 1, 1751. Apparently, Boltzius had taken Urlsperger's words to heart, because by the early 1770s Boltzius had two slaves as personal servants. Moreover, "two other Lutheran pastors were among the largest slave owners in the community."[74] Even with their early anti-slavery stance, the early Lutherans in Georgia allowed economics to change their position.

Integral to the understanding of Lutherans' positions on slavery is the doctrine of Two Kingdoms, an ideological separation of worldly issues from spiritual issues.[75] With an acknowledgement of this perspective, one can see how Lutherans justified serving the spiritual needs of black slaves (i.e., by allowing their participation in religious functions) while at the same time allowing their enslavement. Early records illustrate a genuine concern on the part of Lutherans for the physical and spiritual well-being of black slaves.[76] In the Hudson Valley of New York, Reverend Wilhelm Christopher Berkenmeyer (1687-1751) allowed for black slaves to join Lutheran churches, provided they "do not intend to abuse their Christianity, to break the laws of the land, or to dissolve the tie of obedience [slavery]."[77] Berkenmeyer did not see

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[73] George Fenwick Jones, *The Georgia Dutch from the Rhine and Danube to Savannah, 1733-1783* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 268-269, quoted in CTCR, *Racism and the Church,* 19n44; Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 57.
[74] CTCR, *Racism and the Church,* 19.
[75] See Seltz, "LCMS Identity and Mission in the American Urban Context," 82ff.
[76] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 56.
[77] Harry J. Kreider, *Lutheranism in Colonial New York* (New York: Edwards Brothers, Inc., 1942), 56, quoted in CTCR, *Racism and the Church,* 18 (brackets in CTCR).

anything wrong with slavery from his Christian perspective.[78] Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787), one of the most influential Lutheran leaders in America, argued for the humane treatment of slaves, and for improving their condition in general. Muhlenberg, who was responsible for creating the earliest Lutheran synod in America, spent time outside his normal work to preach among slaves and to administer the sacraments (baptism and communion) to them. He sympathized with them, but did not oppose their enslavement.[79]

Slavery became "the chief issue…in the social and political life" of Lutherans during the antebellum period.[80] It proved disruptive, not only among church leadership, but among laypeople as well. From the last part of the eighteenth century into the nineteenth, many German Lutherans moved south from the North. Even if they had seen and interacted with slaves and free blacks in the North, their contacts with blacks increased as they settled in Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, and Tennessee.[81] Many more Lutherans migrated directly from Germany. Those Lutherans who were not directly exposed to slavery (e.g., farmers of the North and West, or new immigrants from Europe) had a different perspective than those Lutherans in the South.[82] Synods responded to discussions of slavery with official decisions.[83]

The Tennessee Synod, when a member asked at their 1822 convention "whether Slavery is not to be considered a great evil which is tolerated in our land," had resolved to "unanimously consider it a great evil in our land," and "advised every minister to admonish every master to

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[78] CTCR, *Racism and the Church,* 18.
[79] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 327, 56.
[80] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 160-161.
[81] Echols, "Lutheranism," 1667-1668.
[82] Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism, 161.
[83] One example was the Five Point Plan, which the North Carolina Synod adopted in 1817 (see Johnson, *Black Christians*, 106-108).

treat his slaves well and to observe his Christian duties towards them."[84] In contrast, the South Carolina Synod, in response to increasing pressure from northern abolitionists, and citing passages from the New Testament, in 1835 produced what "was perhaps one of the strongest pro-slavery statements made by any Lutheran body."[85] Just prior to the resolutions, the president addressed the synod:

> It is not my province to anticipate any action, which the Synod may think proper to adopt in reference to this all important subject. I would merely observe, that nearly every community of [C]hristians in our land, have declared their sentiments on this subject, and spoken in a language not to be misunderstood. The time has arrived when the voice of our own [c]hurch should be heard.[86]

He argued that abolitionists were "forgetful of the Golden Rule" and "reckless of the fundamental maxim of [C]hristianity, that every man must stand or fall to his own master." With fundamental differences such as these, between 1837 and 1859, six Lutheran synods formally separated themselves from any church which allowed its members to hold slaves.

The number of black Lutherans grew tremendously during the nineteenth century (peaking at 1,030 communicants in the lower southern states in 1859), but this changed in the southern states as a result of the Civil War.[87] Because of immigration and settlement patterns, relatively few Lutheran congregations existed in the slave states.[88] In Georgia, for instance, there were only eight Lutheran churches by 1859. They included 655 white members and sixty-one black members.[89] One historian noted that the Georgia Synod was organized with a "missionary

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[84] *A Report of the Transactions of the Third German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Tennessee, 1822*, reprinted in Lewis W. Spitz, Sr., "The Lutheran Church in America 1619-1857," in Meyer, ed. *Moving Frontiers*, 44.
[85] CTCR, *Racism in the Church,* 20; see also The History of Synod Committee, *A History of the Lutheran Church in South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: The South Carolina Synod of the LCA, 1971), 242.
[86] *Minutes, South Carolina Synod, 1835*, reprinted in Raymond M. Bost and Jeff L. Norris, *All One Body: The Story of the North Carolina Lutheran Synod 1803-1893* (Salisbury, NC: Historical Committee, North Carolina Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1994), 85.
[87] Though a seemingly small number, this was a large percentage of Lutherans in the South. For example, black Lutherans made up twenty percent of the South Carolina Synod. Johnson, *Black Christians*, 126, 128.
[88] Shrader, "Black Theology and History," 11.
[89] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 33.

spirit."[90] This was a necessity, because the Lutherans were decades behind the Baptists and Methodists in proselytizing to Georgians. After the Salzburgers had established themselves in the 1730s, the next significant growth of Lutheranism in Georgia came in 1838 when Jacob Kleckley, a seminary student, organized Mount Zion Church in Macon County.[91] This church had separate entrances for men and women, and a back door for slaves. The slaves "were members of [the] church. The slaves attended services regularly, and partook of the Holy Communion, although at a separate table."[92] When the Georgia Synod was established on July 29, 1860, a separate service for black members was held in the afternoon.[93] These were common practices within other denominations as well. The slow growth of the Lutheran church in Georgia was halted even further by the onset of the Civil War. Lutherans fought on both sides of the war, aligning with their neighbors.[94]

Separation along synodical lines, which continued after the war, hindered progress after the Civil War for Lutheran expansion in the South.[95] In 1863, due to the Civil War and disagreements with Lutherans in the North, southern churches formed the *General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Confederate States of America*.[96] Such separation was particularly detrimental to the spread of Lutheranism among black people.[97] Therefore, Black Lutheranism began to emerge after the Civil War. Prior to the war, black slaves had generally

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[90] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 36.
[91] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 30.
[92] Quoted in Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 30.
[93] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 35.
[94] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 161, 167.
[95] Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, 283.
[96] Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, 245; Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 38. Separation occurred within other denominations, too: see Shrader, "Black Theology and History," 6.
[97] Johnson noted that this is partly due to the fact that black Lutherans, after being "invited" to leave Lutheran congregations, had nowhere else to go if they were to remain Lutheran. This is in contrast to Baptists and Methodists which had black congregations and pastors, and had become indigenous to the black community decades earlier. Johnson, *Black Christians*, 148.

worshipped in the same congregations as their masters, partaking in sacraments and being buried in the same cemeteries. After emancipation, Lutherans followed the lead of other denominations by separating their congregations and holding racially divided worship services.[98] This was not, as has been suggested by some historians, the idea or necessarily the desire of black Lutherans.[99] Rather, they "were either asked to leave Lutheran congregations or were summarily put out."[100] For example, St. John's church in Charleston changed their constitution to allow only white members.[101] A resolution of the Tennessee Synod (adopted 1866) began:

> Whereas, the colored people among us no longer sustain the same relation to the white man that they did, formerly…and whereas, some of them were formerly members of our congregations and still claim membership in them, but owing to the plainly marked distinctions which God has made between us and them, giving different colors, and so forth, it is felt by us and them also, that there ought to be separate places of worship, and also separate ecclesiastical organizations, so that everyone could worship God with the least possible embarrassment.[102]

The North Carolina Synod and others adopted similar policies, thus separating black Lutherans for nearly a century. In Georgia, specifically, the sixty-eight black communicant members in 1863 dwindled to twenty-four in 1867, "and after 1867 there is no mention of blacks in the rosters of the churches."[103] The same happened in other denominations as well.[104] For example, in Bethany Baptist Church in Pine Mountain, Georgia, during the antebellum period members received black people through a separate door, and granted requests for burial in the regular cemetery. After the Civil War, however, black members formed separate congregations, and whites allowed them separate spaces in their cemeteries.[105]

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[98] CTCR, *Racism in the Church,* 20.
[99] See discussion in Kenneth K. Bailey, "The Post-Civil War Racial Separations in Southern Protestantism: Another Look," *Church History* 46, no. 4 (December 1977): 454-456.
[100] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 148.
[101] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 108-109.
[102] Quoted in Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 24-25.
[103] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 39.
[104] In this case it was perhaps because of the desire of their black members (see note 99, i.e., Bailey, above).
[105] Lillian D. Champion, *History of Bethany Baptist Church, Pine Mountain, Georgia, 1828-1978* (Pine Mountain, GA: Bethany Baptist Church, 1978), 39.

Shortly after they had racially separated, white Lutherans began to care again for the spiritual wellbeing of African American Lutherans. First the Tennessee Synod, in 1866, and shortly thereafter the North Carolina Synod and the Joint Synod of Ohio, established black congregations in the South, and also began training black clergy to serve them. For example, the Tennessee Synod began a program of ordaining black ministers to work within their black churches, "to license them to preach, catechize, baptize and celebrate the rites of matrimony among them of his own race…This license does not authorize them to preach in our churches…we advise them to erect houses for themselves in which they may worship."[106] Coincident with this separation and renewed interest in black missions was the beginning of the most comprehensive mission work among African Americans, which a group of northern Lutherans began in the 1870s.

The first dedicated effort of any Lutheran body to attempt mission work exclusively among African Americans began in 1877. In July 1872, a group of Lutherans from northern states (Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin) had organized the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.[107] Although there were multiple synods involved, a large part of mission support came from the Missouri Synod.[108] For its first five years, the Synodical Conference had cooperated in foreign mission work with mission societies in Germany.[109] After a break with the German societies due to theological differences, the leaders of the conference sought another outlet for its "foreign" mission efforts.[110] At the sixth

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[106] Quoted in Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 25.
[107] Armin W. Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference: Ecumenical Endeavor* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 1.
[108] Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference*, 129; William J. Danker, "Into All the World," in Meyer, ed. *Moving Frontiers*, 317.
[109] Specifically, the Hermannsburg and Leipzig Societies. F. Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making: The Missionary Enterprise Among Missouri Synod Lutherans, 1846-1963* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 67ff.
[110] Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference*, 129; Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 67ff.

convention of the Synodical Conference, assembled at Fort Wayne, Indiana in July 1877, the president of the Conference, Reverend Herman A. Preus (a member of the Norwegian Lutheran Synod), asked: "Is it not time that the Synodical Conference direct its attention to missions to the heathen and perhaps call into a being a mission to Negroes and Indians of this country?"[111] This was a tactical suggestion "to conserve synodical resources."[112] Focusing on a "foreign" population in America would save the expense of shipping missionaries overseas, and guarantee the continuation of mission offerings by parishioners within the Conference.[113] Perhaps remembering their unsuccessful mission among the Chippewa in Michigan during the 1840s, Conference delegates turned to the black population of the South.[114]

After the delegates unanimously approved the resolution their newly created missionary board set to work. Significantly, in commencing their black missions, the Synodical Conference continued policies similar to those of the Tennessee and North Carolina Synods by keeping their congregations divided along racial lines.[115] The Conference called John F. Doescher, who had been living in Yankton, South Dakota, as a frontier missionary, to be its first missionary to the black population in America. Reverend J. F. Buenger, chairman of the Conference's Mission Board for Colored Missions, installed Doescher in October, and by the end of the year Doescher established St. Paul's Colored Lutheran Church in Little Rock, Arkansas.[116] Beginning in January 1878, he toured Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee to familiarize himself with the situation. White congregations affiliated with the Synodical

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[111] Synodical Conference, *Proceedings*, 1877, p. 44, quoted in Danker, "Into All the World," 317.
[112] Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 85.
[113] "Mission festival collections continued to garner funds for foreign missions but the Missouri Synod was in touch with no foreign mission program." Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 83, 85. See also Krenke, "Out of the Blocks," 2.
[114] See Nelson's brief discussion about the Michigan program. Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, 199-200. "No explanation was given for this choice." Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 85.
[115] CTCR, *Racism in the Church,* 20-21.
[116] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 201.

Conference served as his hosts, although those same congregations had not previously had any significant interaction with their nearest black populations.[117]

During his tour, Doescher began a mission in New Orleans in April 1878, opening the first Lutheran Sunday school in the city with thirty-six students. By May, of the one hundred fifty-six students at the school, thirty-five were adults. That group grew into Mount Zion Lutheran Church.[118] Doescher reported back to the Synodical Conference in July 1878 that much work remained to be done in the area of black missions.[119] Specifically, many African Americans were interested in Lutheran doctrines and teachings, but pastors for black missions were scarce. Doescher did what he could, and in January 1879, he facilitated the New Orleans mission by opening its first Christian day school and hiring Willis R. Polk, the first black man to work in the Synodical Conference's black missions. In April, Mount Zion held its first adult confirmation class.[120]

This was not an opportune time for a deepening involvement of Midwestern white Lutheran missionaries in the South. With the end of Reconstruction and the rise of the Jim Crow system, Doescher and others, while apparently making strides bringing Lutheranism to the black population, also faced threats to their safety from the Ku Klux Klan and other whites, including some white Lutherans, especially when they travelled with black pastors.[121] In one instance Nils Jules Bakke, whom Doescher had installed as his successor in November 1880, narrowly

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[117] Krenke, "Out of the Blocks," 3.
[118] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 201; Gray, "The History of LCMS Mercy Work with African Americans," 3; Krenke, "Out of the Blocks," 4.
[119] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 201; Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Biographical Dictionary of Black Lutheran Clergymen* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1978), v; Krenke, "Out of the Blocks," 3.
[120] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 202.
[121] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 42-43; Krenke, "Out of the Blocks," 3-4.

escaped a Klan mob at a railway station in Mississippi.[122] Two other pastors experienced physical beatings by the Klan in central Alabama.[123]

The Synodical Conference's black missions greatly expanded when the Conference absorbed the Alpha Synod—the first black Lutheran Synod in America. During the 1880s the North Carolina Synod ordained four African American men to serve four of its black congregations. This was not unusual, as there had been black pastors in the North Carolina Synod for decades. At a convention of the synod in 1889, held near Concord, those four black men, David J. Koontz, William Philo Phifer, Samuel Holt, and Nathan Clapp, were present, recognized, and held voting rights with other members of the synod. The synod's Committee on Work Among the Freedmen "reported receipt of a petition" from the four men that they form their own synod.[124] On May 8, 1889, with Koontz as president, Phifer and the others formed the Alpha Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Freed Men in America, consisting of nearly two hundred members.[125]

Significant as it was, as the first Black Lutheran synod in the United States, the Alpha Synod lasted only one year due to a lack of financial support.[126] After Koontz's death in May 1890, Phifer, secretary of the Alpha Synod, wrote on behalf of the other members to the president of the Missouri Synod (the Mission Board of the Synodical Conference was at the time comprised of all Missouri Synod members) for help.[127] In 1891, the Mission Board of the Conference, after meeting with the members of the Alpha Synod, took control of the five

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[122] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 44, 82, 202.
[123] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 44.
[124] Bost and Norris, *All One Body*, 192.
[125] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 202; Shrader, "Black Theology and History," 12; Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 226.
[126] Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 115.
[127] Schuetze, *The Synodical Conference*, 129; Bost and Norris, *All One Body*, 192; Johnson, *Black Christians*, 159-160; Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 115.

congregations of the Alpha Synod and sent Nils Bakke as missionary for the North Carolina field.[128] Bakke arrived in Concord, North Carolina, with his family in 1891, and by October had opened the first Christian day school in North Carolina.[129] In 1892, the Conference sent two more missionaries to North Carolina, both graduates of Concordia Seminary.[130]

Missions and mission work among the black population of the southern states grew, and in 1902 two men, Stuart Doswell and Lucius Malley, became the first African Americans to graduate from Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, one of two seminaries within the Missouri Synod.[131] This growth spurred the Conference leadership to open Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Concord, North Carolina, and Luther College in New Orleans in 1903, specifically to train black church workers.[132] In 1907, the first class graduated from the Theological Department of Immanuel Lutheran.

With a strong foothold in North Carolina, and now multiple veteran black pastors, the black mission field of the Synodical Conference was growing. Early black Lutherans in America had been one or two black members joining a church of German or Scandinavian immigrants. By the early twentieth century, under the leadership of their white counterparts, black Lutherans were training their own church workers. The confessional Lutheran immigrants who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century brought with them a stricter, more conservative version of Lutheranism, but they also became the vanguard of evangelization among the southern black population of the United States. Black Lutherans who were products of the Synodical

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[128] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 202; Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 115-118. Nils Bakke would become the most important figure in black missions of the Synodical Conference. Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, 283.
[129] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 202; Gray, "The History of LCMS Mercy Work with African Americans," 6.
[130] Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism*, 226.
[131] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 203.
[132] Echols, "Lutheranism," 1668; Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 203; CTCR, *Racism in the Church,* 23.

Conference's mission work would continue the traditional conservative identity of those original German Lutherans.

Chapter Two: Born in the Center of Black Lutheranism (Wilcox County, Alabama)[133]

Wilcox County, Alabama, was the center of a large mission project undertaken by the Synodical Conference – a continuation of the program inaugurated in the 1870s. This differed from the circumstances in North Carolina, however, as Wilcox County was a rural county in the Deep South with no previous history of a Lutheran presence. But what began in 1915 as a response to a local schoolteacher's request for assistance grew into dozens of Lutheran churches and parochial schools across central Alabama by the 1930s, ultimately becoming the most productive of the Synodical Conference's black missions. One of the products of these new schools was Addie Graves, born in Wilcox County in 1922, who attended a Lutheran school there through the eighth grade. When she and her husband John left the county in the late 1940s because of his assignment to Fort Benning, she took her Lutheran identity with her as she found a new church home in Columbus, Georgia. But before we get to Addie Graves and Lutheran missions in Wilcox County, we must first explain the circumstances which led Rosa Young to request help from the Synodical Conference.

Because of inadequate transportation infrastructure, as well as a generally poor population, residents of Wilcox County lacked a good educational system. Wilcox County lies in the middle of Alabama's Black Belt, a geographical region so named because of its dark and rich alluvial soil. Alabama lies deep in the broader Black Belt region, which stretches from eastern Texas to the Carolinas. The Alabama River, with its annual flooding, provided not only the rich, dark soil, which was excellent for growing cotton, but also allowed transportation via steamboat

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[133] The use of "Black Lutheranism" here is fundamentally different than the use by Pero and others (see note 22, above).

into the twentieth century.[134] This was the only way plantation owners and other farmers could sell their cotton and receive goods from Selma and Montgomery upriver. By the twentieth century, except for those on the expansive plantations, most of the white residents of the county lived in Camden, the only city in Wilcox County, located forty miles south of Selma, and a few of the white families owned most of the shops and businesses. The large black population lived primarily outside of Camden in the many unincorporated communities, such as Boiling Springs, Catherine, Arlington, Oak Hill, and Snow Hill. Thus geographically separated from the white population, the black residents had also, in the Alabama Constitution of 1901, lost their right to vote.[135]

Prior to 1908, Camden did not have a single public school.[136] That year, the Alabama state legislature created county high schools, and the new school in Camden became Wilcox County High School. However, the high school and the new middle school, begun in 1909, were only large enough for a small number of the students in the county: around 2,100 white students and over 10,100 black students. By 1914, of the nearly 2,000 white students (the number had fallen since 1909) only about 300 were literate. In contrast, over 4,000 of the 10,250 black students were literate.[137]

Since the 1870s, there had been both black and white support for schools for black children in Wilcox County.[138] Some were supported by religious bodies, such as the Northern

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[134] Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma: The Continuing Struggle for Civil Rights in the Rural South* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 2-3.
[135] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 14-15.
[136] Clinton McCarty, *The Reins of Power: Racial Change and Challenge in a Southern County* (Tallahassee, FL: Sentry Press, 1999), 87.
[137] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 108.
[138] Of course, this was not universal. At one point arsonists destroyed a Presbyterian mission school at Miller's Ferry. Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 49-50.

Presbyterians, and some, like the Snow Hill Institute, were privately funded.[139] One writer noted the irony that some of the black schools, such as The Snow Hill Institute and some church affiliated schools were considered by the white population to be better than the white schools.[140] One irritated white resident wrote a letter to the editor of a local newspaper: "Have we not a single school that will in any wise compare with a half dozen colored schools in the county? We warn our people against continued indifference."[141] Nevertheless, some black residents recognized that their schools could still be improved. Rosa Jinsey Young was one such resident.

Born in Rosebud, twelve miles from Camden, on May 14, 1890, the fourth of ten children of Grant Young, an African Methodist Episcopal minister, and his wife Nancy, Young graduated as valedictorian from Payne University in Selma in 1909.[142] Frustrated with the poor situation of educational facilities for children in the area, Young opened a private school in Rosebud, Wilcox County, in October 1912.[143] She opened the Rosebud Literacy and Industrial School on five acres she had purchased from her family, and she received help and financial support from people in the area.[144] After securing funding for supplies and staff, Young began accepting students. Over two hundred attended the school in Rosebud for the 1913-1914 school year.[145]

By 1914, the boll weevil infestation made its way from Texas to Alabama, devastating cotton crops along the way. It crushed the economy in Wilcox County. Two-thirds of the 1915 crop was lost. Farmers and land-owners turned to cattle and other crops to replace cotton, but recovery was not easy. It took two years for corn to become the new major cash crop for the

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[139] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 40-41.
[140] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 87.
[141] Quoted in McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 87.
[142] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 33. Payne University was named for Daniel Alexander Payne, who had originally been ordained as a Lutheran pastor, but later became a major figure in the A.M.E. church.
[143] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 69.
[144] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 71-78.
[145] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 86.

county.[146] Because of their already poor economic situation, black farmers lost more than whites. As for Young's school in Rosebud, "things looked very dark."[147] Because of the poor crops, her students' parents could not pay tuition, and Young had to let some teachers go.[148] After seeking a higher-paying position elsewhere, and not wanting to waste the good faith shown by her white donors, Young decided to try her best to keep the school open. She went on a fund-raising tour. Young visited and wrote to multiple people and organizations, including her alma mater Payne University, the African Methodist Episcopal church, where her father had been a preacher, the Rosenwald Fund, and multiple Presbyterian church bodies, only to be continually denied.[149] Finally, in the fall of 1915, Rosa Young wrote to Booker T. Washington, the president of Tuskegee Institute and a trustee of the Snow Hill Normal and Industrial Institute, for help.[150]

Washington, unable to help directly but familiar with the work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference in Louisiana and the Carolinas, suggested that Young write to them for assistance.[151] According to Young, Washington "said they were doing more for the colored race than any other denomination he knew of."[152] Young wrote to Reverend Christopher F. Drewes, Mission Director for the Synodical Conference: "I am writing to see if your conference will take our school under its auspices."[153] Drewes sent Nils J. Bakke, who had been involved in black Lutheran missions in North Carolina, to assess and report on the situation. After Bakke's report of his visit to Alabama in December 1915, the Conference sent him back to

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[146] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 84, 92-93; Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 68.
[147] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 90.
[148] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 90.
[149] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 99-101.
[150] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 102.
[151] Gray, "The History of LCMS Mercy Work with African Americans," 7; Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 203; Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 102-103.
[152] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 103.
[153] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 104.

take charge of the Alabama mission field. Young and Bakke agreed that the Synodical Conference would take responsibility for the school, and Bakke soon added Lutheran material to the curriculum and met with local families.[154]

On Easter Sunday 1916, Bakke baptized fifty-eight people and confirmed seventy, including Rosa Young. He organized a congregation in Rosebud, Alabama, and the Rosebud Literary and Industrial School became Christ Lutheran Church and School, "the mother church of black Lutheranism in Alabama."[155] Within the year, the Rosebud congregation had nearly two hundred members. When other communities heard of this success, they requested information about setting up schools in their areas. Together, Young and Bakke visited and established Lutheran schools (at first) and congregations in those areas, ultimately planting thirty schools and thirty-five congregations in Alabama and Pensacola, Florida. White residents of Wilcox County looked favorably upon the establishment of more schools for black children.[156] By the 1920s, there were sixty-five white schools and about one hundred black schools in the public system, though most of them utilized some sort of temporary space (and many were consolidated over the next decades).[157]

After World War I, many black residents left Wilcox County in "the greatest exodus of Negroes from Wilcox ever known in its history," as part of the Great Migration.[158] This out-migration was typical for the Black Belt region, where the black population dropped by eleven

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[154] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 119ff.
[155] Gray, "The History of LCMS Mercy Work with African Americans," 8.
[156] Rosa J. Young, "The Growth of Lutheran Mission Work in Alabama," in *Light in the Dark Belt*, 127-137. Of course, there were some detractors and Young made some enemies, e.g.: "The leaders in the sectarian churches pledged themselves to overthrow the Lutheran Church. One preacher announced that he would be a wasp in my garments as long as I lived." Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 138.
[157] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 91.
[158] Quoted in McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 93.

percent between 1910 and 1920.[159] After crop failures and economic challenges in the first part of the twentieth century, many people moved out of Wilcox County to urban areas, such as Selma and Montgomery.[160]

However, even with a shrinking population, Rosa Young found success. She received a small amount of respect in the surrounding communities because of her determination.[161] After Bakke left in 1920, Young continued her work, and even travelled as far as Wisconsin and Minnesota soliciting support and funding for her schools.[162] After successful travels, and passing the public school teachers examination, she helped to open Alabama Lutheran Academy in Selma, Alabama, in 1922 to train schoolteachers.[163] Soon the Synodical Conference's Alabama black missions grew and its schools became highly respected. Addie Graves was a student at one of those schools.

Addie Graves was born Addie Lee Ross on August 1, 1922, in Kimbrough, a railroad town in western Wilcox County which had only been established earlier that year.[164] Because Addie was born prematurely and was not expected to live, her father, John Ross, abandoned her and moved with his other children to New York.[165] Her mother, Cora Ross (née Cook) died two

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[159] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 93, 109.
[160] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 31-33.
[161] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 127ff.
[162] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 170ff.
[163] "Teachers Examination," *Wilcox Progressive Era* (Camden, AL), July 21, 1921. Even though Alabama Lutheran Academy was not a public school, passing this examination was probably helpful.
[164] "Addie L. Graves," *Findagrave.com*, January 25, 2010, https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47130278; "Addie Lee Ross," Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936-2007, Ancestry.com, *U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015); "Addie L. Graves," Social Security Administration, *Social Security Death Index, Master File* (Social Security Administration), Ancestry.com, U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014 [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014); "Graves, Addie L.," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer*, June 19, 2007, C2; "Kimbrough," *Wilcox County Progressive Era* (Camden, AL), April 13, 1922, 1.
[165] Addie Byrd and Felecia Edwards, interview with the author, February 26, 2018 (hereafter abbreviated Daughters, interview).

weeks after giving birth to Addie, and her sister Hattie Reed took the infant into her home.[166] At first Hattie, and then her sister Della and her husband, William H. Gailes, paid tuition for Addie's attendance at Bethany Evangelical Lutheran School, which Rosa Young had helped establish in 1918.[167] William Gailes's brother Earl, a public school teacher, and his wife Susan adopted Addie.[168] This period had a lasting effect on Addie, as she formed not only her Christian faith, but her Lutheran identity. Evidently, it also had an effect on her adoptive brother, Earl and Susan's son Samuel, who would later become a Lutheran pastor.[169]

Rural Lutheran missions in Alabama were at their highest in the 1930s, but the black population in Wilcox County continued to dwindle, and out-migration decimated local Lutheran congregations. By 1930 the county population dropped another twenty-three percent.[170] The county's "economy teetered precariously on the brink of disaster."[171] While Wilcox residents were still feeling the lasting effects of the 1914-1915 boll weevil infestation, by 1932 the economic situation had deteriorated even more.[172] New Deal public works programs, including a nearby Civilian Conservation Corps camp and projects by the Civil Works Administration (later

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[166] Daughters, interview; In the 1930 U.S. Census, her name is given as "Hattie Reed" (married), but in previous censuses it is listed as "Addie Cook." United States Census, 1930, Mobile, Mobile, Alabama, 2B, Enumeration District 0066, Ancestry.com, *1930 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2002); cf. United States Census, 1910, Clifton, Wilcox, Alabama, 15A, Enumeration District 0148, Ancestry.com, *1910 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2006).

[167] Izola Gailes, interview with the author, October 1, 2017; United States Census, 1930, Clifton, Wilcox, Alabama, 6B, Enumeration District 0066, Ancestry.com, *1930 United States Federal Census* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2002); Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 134; Daughters, interview; by the time Addie was in the eighth grade this amounted to ten cents per week. Daughters' interview.

[168] U.S. Census; Daughters, interview; Gailes, interview.

[169] Gailes, interview; Rebecca G. Marshall, email message to author, March 12, 2018.

[170] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 109.

[171] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 70.

[172] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 114.

Works Progress Administration), helped to relieve the situation.[173] Wilcoxans overwhelmingly approved of President Franklin Roosevelt: in 1940 they voted for him 1,504 to 20.[174]

Addie Lee Ross met her husband, John Graves, Jr., while they were working on a National Youth Administration Project at Miller's Ferry, about fifteen miles from Kimbrough.[175] He was born on November 14, 1916, in Catherine, Wilcox County, Alabama, to John Rufus Graves, Sr., and his wife Rebecca.[176] They were Seventh Day Adventists, though they had previously been members of an African Methodist Episcopal Church.[177] After registering for the draft on October 16, 1940, John Graves joined the United States Army in 1941.[178] After he returned from the war, they were married on February 2, 1946, at her church in Alabama.[179]

World War II brought more demographic changes to Wilcox County, including another decrease in population, with men leaving for the military and a variety of defense-related jobs.[180] Even Rosa Young's sister resigned from teaching at her school for a higher-paying government job. By this time there were thirty-two black Lutheran churches in Alabama.[181] Twenty-five percent of the rural black population of Alabama moved to urban areas. This number included Addie and John Graves when they moved to Columbus. Though moving to a new place, she took her Lutheran faith and identity with her.

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[173] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 115-116.
[174] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 122.
[175] Daughters, interview.
[176] Draft Registration Card, John Graves, Jr., 16 October 1940 (The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri, Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147, Box 103), Ancestry.com, U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947 [database online] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011); Daughters, interview.
[177] Marshall, email.
[178] Draft Registration Card, John Graves, Jr.; "Graves Completes Course," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, March 17, 1956, 14.
[179] Daughters, interview; "Addie Lee Ross," Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936-2007, Ancestry.com, *U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007* [database online] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015.
[180] McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 122.
[181] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 146.

Chapter Three: "A Devout Lutheran"[182]

When Addie Graves became Lutheran she joined a long history and heritage of black Lutherans in America. Her upbringing in Wilcox County, and the many Lutheran churches there, had a lasting influence on her. Graves brought her faith background, her principles, and her rural Alabama roots with her in 1947 when she and her husband John moved to the Fountain City. They were part of the mass migration of rural Americans to the cities as a result of the Great Depression and World Wars. She sought out and joined the only Lutheran church in Columbus, Georgia, after moving there, but the urban center of Columbus was far removed from rural Wilcox County, Alabama, and was a new and very different place for her. She entered Columbus, which had a much higher white population, at the height of the segregation era. She also became the only black person in the only Lutheran church in the area. But this was not a simple transition, and she experienced racial discrimination from her fellow Lutherans in Columbus.

Columbus, Georgia is situated ninety miles south of Atlanta, just across the Chattahoochee River from Phenix City, Alabama. The Georgia legislature chose that location when Columbus was founded in 1828 because it was the head of navigation on the river. Situated at the highest navigable point on the Chattahoochee, Columbus had served as an economic center since its founding, with boats able to ship goods to and from Columbus down through Florida and into the Gulf of Mexico. More significantly, however, Columbus became an industrial center as soon as the first entrepreneurs built dams to harness the power of the Chattahoochee. Columbus's industrial output during the Civil War caused a Union attack on Columbus at the

[182] The quote is from Marshall, email.

end of the war. After the Civil War, Columbus industrial leaders rebuilt their factories and the city modernized.

Since the time of Reconstruction, and into the early decades of the twentieth century, the economy of Georgia had been centered on agriculture and simple industry (e.g., textile manufacturing). Georgia experienced changes brought on by the national crisis of the Great Depression. Moreover, after the boll weevil devastated cotton production, some farmers diversified their crops, but many previously rural Georgians moved to cities like Columbus, seeking employment in textile mills or iron foundries. This urban migration, which increased racial diversity in cities, accelerated social changes, including the acceptance of New Deal programs.

During hard economic times in the 1920s and 1930s, Georgians continued practices and policies of racism and segregation; the situation was exacerbated by an increasing urban migration of a previously rural black population. Columbus, like other southern cities, exhibited a system of social control which directed blacks to certain modes of behavior toward whites:

> At its most benevolent, the system permitted African Americans to go about their separate lives relatively unmolested. More often, they were humiliated by daily confrontations that fixed their 'place'—grown men and women called 'boy' and 'girl'; forced to give way to whites on public sidewalks; sitting in the back of the bus or in the filthy balcony at the theatre; drinking from tepid 'colored' water fountains when whites had iced water; even if educated professionals, having to cast down their eyes and speak in subservient tones to any white—suffering the consequences if they didn't.[183]

The Jim Crow system was in full force, with a revival of the Ku Klux Klan and a continued emphasis on conservative (i.e., states' rights) politics.

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[183] Virginia Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus: An Historical Perspective," *Muscogiana* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2012): 9.

Textiles were the largest industry in Columbus, but that soon changed as Fort Benning became "the most important single development" for the city in the first half of the twentieth century.[184] After its humble beginnings prior to the First World War, Fort Benning underwent eight million dollars' worth of expansion by 1930. With the New Deal, construction at Fort Benning intensified, and the population increased.[185]

The number of troops at Fort Benning began to grow in 1939, in preparation for the entry of the United States into World War II. By early 1940, they numbered forty-five thousand. In 1941, the Army opened an Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning. As the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* noted at the time:

> This city was going about its business of being one of the most progressive and charming cities in Georgia when one day, almost without warning, 50,000 soldiers were put down a few miles away from the city limits.[186]

Due to population movements and demographic shifts associated with wartime production, this was the first time in Georgia that industrial workers outnumbered farm workers. Although over three hundred thousand Georgians served overseas, more than that entered the state for military training. Georgia was home to more Army training posts than all other states but Texas, and Fort Benning was the largest infantry training ground.[187] Because of Fort Benning, millions of Americans filtered through Columbus, greatly benefitting the city economically.[188] But beyond jobs and paychecks, the presence of the base also encouraged military families. One historian calculated that between 1946 and 1955, 6,679 new single family homes were built in

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[184] John S. Lupold, *Columbus, Georgia, 1828-1978* (Columbus, GA: Columbus Sesquicentennial, Inc., 1978), 101.
[185] James Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest: LCMS Florida-Georgia District's First 50 Years* (Orlando, FL: Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Florida-Georgia District, 1997), 15; Lupold, *Columbus*, 30-31, 103.
[186] "From the Crow's Nest," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, May 23, 1941.
[187] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 18-20.
[188] "From the Crow's Nest," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, May 23, 1941.

Columbus.[189] As a result of World War II, by 1950, Fort Benning remained the top economic driver in the city.[190]

Fort Benning also drew a small number of Lutherans to the area. Since the time of the Salzburgers, few Lutherans pursued mission work in Georgia before the twentieth century.[191] Reverend C. F. Broders, the first Southern District missionary to Georgia, created Grace Lutheran Church in Atlanta in 1922, with nine communicant members. At the time, Atlanta was the obvious choice for a state-wide mission headquarters. Members of Grace Lutheran Church provided for the Lutheran circuit riders who traversed the state, and in 1927 they had raised enough funds to build a permanent building.[192] In 1930, Reverend Theodore G. Ahrendt arrived in Atlanta to replace Broders, who had moved to Illinois. Ahrendt—whom one researcher called the "synodical patriarch of Georgia"—traveled extensively throughout Georgia during the Depression. For a time, he was the only pastor for Lutherans living in Columbus, Athens, Macon, Rome, Marietta, East Point, and the Atlanta area.[193] In 1937, Ahrendt gathered with a group of Lutherans in Columbus to establish the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. Ahrendt met with them at Trinity Episcopal Church, in downtown Columbus, every other week as part of his regular circuit.[194]

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[189] Lupold, *Columbus*, 106.
[190] Lupold, *Columbus*, 106.
[191] In a land of established Baptists and Methodists, and in a period of drastic social and political change, certain qualities prevented Lutheranism from blossoming in Georgia until the mid-twentieth century. Lutheran expansion, especially in the American South, was hampered by its characteristic confessional pietism and political quietism, and by the Lutherans' tendency to prefer an historical European identity. Therefore, mission work in Georgia did not begin until the twentieth century. Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 16.
[192] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 16-17.
[193] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 17.
[194] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 17; Anna Mion, "Strangers in the Land: The Origins of Lutheranism in Germany, Colonial Georgia, and Columbus, Georgia," (student paper, Columbus State University, 1998), 7, Columbus State University Collection (MC 5), Columbus State University Archives.

In 1938, Ahrendt installed Reverend Edgar H. Albers, a student at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, as the missionary pastor for Columbus, Georgia, and Auburn, Alabama.[195] His area also included Thomasville, Georgia, Panama City and Defuniak Springs, Florida, and "a number of air corps and army camps," though Columbus remained his home base.[196] Beginning in March 1938, the congregation of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer held services at the Chase Conservatory of Music in downtown Columbus.[197] On September 22, 1940, the group, numbering about twenty people, formally organized the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer as the first Lutheran church in Columbus, Georgia.[198]

The presence of Fort Benning brought discussions of race relations to the fore in Columbus.[199] Black veterans, returning from a war in which they fought for others' freedoms, began to strongly insist on their own freedoms in the United States. Blacks had already fought in every American military engagement, and many serving in the armed forces had at least some knowledge of that fact, if not direct experience. But they had been in segregated units. That changed when President Truman signed Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948, which desegregated the U.S. military (although this was not fully implemented until after the Korean War).[200] The presence of an integrated army, and especially "the pressures exerted by the Army in areas such as housing," enabled the eventual desegregation of Columbus and broader

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[195] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 17; Mion, "Strangers in the Land," 7; Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 52; Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *Alive in Christ at 45* (Columbus, GA: Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 1985), 5.
[196] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 17; "Lutheran Church Pastor Resigns," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, August 18, 1946.
[197] Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *Alive in Christ at 45*, 5.
[198] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 52; Mion, "Strangers in the Land," 7; Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *Alive in Christ at 45*, 5.
[199] Lupold, *Columbus*, 106.
[200] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 113.

society.[201] There was tension at first, however. The 1941 lynching on Fort Benning of black soldier Felix Hall serves as a prime example.[202] This only fueled more civil rights activity.

Columbus boasts a long history of civil rights activity. Though earlier groups existed, such as the Social-Civic-25 Club, the establishment of the local chapter of the NAACP in 1937 is considered the beginning of civil rights activism in Columbus.[203] Thomas H. Brewer, a black physician, helped establish that local NAACP chapter, and served as its vice president.[204] Brewer was a graduate of Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, and had moved to Columbus in 1920, after hearing of a lack of black doctors.[205] He was a skilled organizer, and had spearheaded the formation of the Colored Columbus Medical Association.[206] As a doctor, he earned a comfortable living, and was able to involve himself in political activism.[207] He was also "somewhat immune to pressure from the white power structure."[208] Brewer became a champion for civil rights, and over the next decades fought for expanded rights for blacks. He worked with other black community leaders to integrate parks and swimming pools, and get African Americans hired as police officers.[209] In 1941, Brewer, Edwin E. Farley, Lula Lunsford, and other black leaders of Columbus met with and advised a committee on the formation of a black YMCA in anticipation of more black troops coming to Fort Benning.[210]

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[201] Lupold, *Columbus*, 106.
[202] "Dead Soldier is Identified," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 8, 1941; "FBI Probing Death at Fort," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 24, 1941.
[203] e.g., Mayor's Commission on Women and Minorities, *Black Pioneers in the Historical Development of the Columbus, Georgia, Community* (Columbus, GA: Mayor's Commission on Women and Minorities, 1990); Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus," 12.
[204] Ridenour, "Thomas H. Brewer," 5; Susan Tjofat, "Some Key Events in the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1968, as Reported in the Columbus, Georgia, Press," (student paper, Columbus State University, 1991), 2, Columbus State University Collection (MC 5), Columbus State University Archives.
[205] Ridenour, "Thomas H. Brewer," 2.
[206] Ridenour, "Thomas H. Brewer," 3.
[207] Ridenour, "Thomas H. Brewer," 2.
[208] Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus," 12.
[209] Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus," 12.
[210] "Group Planning Negro Army "Y" in Columbus," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, January 19, 1941.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, emerging civil rights leaders began testing the waters, and some resorted to legal means to challenge the Jim Crow status quo.[211] By 1946, Dr. Brewer, Reverend Primus King, and a group called the Citizens Committee of Columbus successfully challenged and defeated the white-only primary system of the Democratic Party in Columbus.[212] After white law enforcement officers denied King the right to vote in the Democratic primary in 1944, he successfully sued the Muscogee County Democratic Party Executive Committee.[213] King won the case.[214] This led to a federal court decision firmly establishing the right for blacks to vote in state primary elections.[215]

The end of the Second World War meant fewer soldiers at Fort Benning, and there were changes at Redeemer as well. Pastor Albers left in 1946. Army Chaplain Arthur Senne served in an interim capacity until early 1947. Later in 1947, John Rische became the first full-time pastor of Redeemer.[216] The congregation bought an antebellum home at 837 Brown Avenue, which they renovated and used as a worship space until 1950.[217]

As time passed, missionary pastors in Florida and Georgia, due to the great distance from district headquarters in New Orleans, felt a growing separation between their mission fields and the Southern District. (The Southern District, formed in New Orleans, Louisiana, originally included Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas.[218]) They eventually separated to form the Florida-Georgia District in 1948. Redeemer in Columbus became the only

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[211] Stephens, "The Standoff," 15.
[212] Ridenour, "Thomas H. Brewer," 5-6; Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus," 12; Mayor's Commission, *Black Pioneers*.
[213] "Suit for $5,000 Filed by Negro," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, September 13, 1945.
[214] "Judge Decides Negro Entitled to Primary Vote," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 13, 1945.
[215] The King case followed the *Smith v. Allwright* case, in which the Supreme Court declared illegal the all white primary in Texas.
[216] Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *Alive in Christ at 45*, 5.
[217] Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *Alive in Christ at 45*, 5-6.
[218] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, ix.

Georgia congregation to sign the original charter in February 1948, when a group of pastors and laymen from twenty congregations across Georgia and Florida met in Orlando to organize the Florida-Georgia District of the Missouri Synod.[219] Members of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Columbus, Georgia, played prominent roles in that story. Martin M. W. Holls, president of the Southern District, remarked that Grace Lutheran Church in Atlanta and the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Columbus, as the main Missouri Synod congregations in Georgia, "would provide bases for future mission drives."[220] By the 1950s, the small number of active Lutheran missionaries in Georgia had established a firm foundation in a few places in the state. Delegates to the convention provided their superiors a list of recommendations, including a survey of prospective new fields, and setting new rates of pay for mission pastors.[221] On May 10, 1949, Frederick L. von Husen, missionary-at-large for the district, went to Columbus to assume his duties there.[222]

Whereas Lutherans in the Midwest had been able to rely on parish schools as a means of supporting congregations and local mission activity, Florida and Georgia mission outposts relied upon Sunday school and auxiliary organizations. Those organizations were particularly helpful with raising funds early on when district support was limited, as well as canvassing prospective mission locations.[223] Shortly after the initiation of mission activity in Georgia, many individuals helped to further the spread of Lutheranism. In Columbus, the Lutheran Service Center for members of the military, which originated at a meeting of the Ladies Guild of Redeemer in April 1951, was instrumental in beginning a church there. In fact, Fort Benning was the main reason

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[219] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 52.
[220] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 30-31.
[221] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 33.
[222] Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *Alive in Christ at 45*, 5.
[223] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, ix-x.

for Lutherans relocating to Columbus.[224] By this time, many of the Lutheran pastors in Georgia served local military members, and they encouraged their parishioners to welcome them spiritually and socially.[225]

By 1950, Addie and John Graves were living at 1811 Williams Street (present Nina Street), about five blocks from the meeting place of Redeemer at the time at 855 Brown Avenue, and in the next couple of years she attempted to join.[226] It is possible that she saw advertisements in the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* inviting potential members to Redeemer.[227] On March 18, 1951, the Redeemer congregation held a special Palm Sunday service dedicating their new home, the recently purchased Temple Sherith Israel building downtown Columbus.[228] When they held a special dedication service for their new altar and pulpit in December, Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn served as their guest preacher.[229] Piepkorn was a strong advocate for integrating Lutheran churches, and likely did not shy away from that topic during his appearance at Redeemer.[230] By mid-1952, Redeemer voted to allow black members – possibly at the request of Graves to have her new daughter baptized.[231] Though the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer may not have

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[224] "Transiency of Lutherans in Local Area Changing," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, November 18, 1972.
[225] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 20.
[226] *Columbus, Georgia, City Directory* (Richmond, VA: Polk, 1950), 159. It is likely Graves had not attended a church since her arrival in Columbus until now. An example is that of Rachel Lee, a black woman in Orlando, who "had been confirmed during the thirties but had not church to attend during the era of segregation except for the church of the Lutheran Hour." Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43-44. The *Lutheran Hour* is a radio program sponsored by the LCMS, which Redeemer supported on Columbus A.M. station WDAK since the 1940s. "What is the Lutheran Church?" *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 11, 1947.
[227] e.g., "What is the Lutheran Church," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 11, 1947.
[228] The congregation purchased this property on March 2, 1951. Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *25th Anniversary* (Columbus, GA: Lutheran Church of the Redeemer), 1965.
[229] "Lutherans to Dedicate New Altar on Dec. 2," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, November 24, 1951.
[230] e.g., "Mission Support Called Just Debt," *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, OH), August 7, 1939; Galchutt, *The Career of Andrew Schulze*, 134-135.
[231] "Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Secretary's Minutes: July 1949 thru January 1965," 45-46, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Archives, Columbus, Georgia (hereafter abbreviated as LCR Minutes); Daughters, interview.

needed to consider the issue of integration prior to Addie Graves's arrival, certainly they were aware of it as it was a big topic within the synod during the 1930s and 1940s.

The Missouri Synod up to that point had been segregated. The Synod had defined segregation as "a social and not a theological issue."[232] Consequently, the situation remained relatively unchanged until the 1950s. Many Lutheran congregations across the country continued to exclude African Americans.[233] Over time the momentum gained from early successes in black ministry was forgotten and neglected. While the number of black Lutherans grew, budgets were shrinking.[234] For example, the Synodical Conference budget for black ministry between 1931 and 1935 had decreased by fifty percent.[235] (Since at the time the four constituent synods of the conference were responsible for their own general missions, the "primary practical task undertaken by the Synodical Conference was mission work in the black community of the United States."[236]) But while the official Synod policy toward race relations and segregation remained settled for the first half of the twentieth century, a few undercurrents promoting change and a recognition of errors rose to the surface.

After a first attempt in 1927, the General Conference (a group of pastors and other members of the Synodical Conference involved in black ministry, which had formed in 1920) in 1938 proposed the creation of an all-black synod or at least an all-black district within one of the synods of the Synodical Conference.[237] Since neither black pastors nor black congregations held official membership in any of the constituent synods of the conference, black Lutherans had no

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[232] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 41.
[233] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 117-118.
[234] "In the five-year period before 1936, the black membership of the Synodical Conference as a whole grew by 26 percent." Johnson, *Black Christians*, 176.
[235] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 194.
[236] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 193.
[237] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 192-194.

representation within the Synodical Conference.[238] But that is not to say that people, white and black, were not speaking up.

Reverend Andrew Schulze, an active member of the General Conference, in 1941 published *My Neighbor of Another Color*, which caused ripples throughout American Lutheranism. In it, he advocated for racial equality and understanding, and because of it "Lutherans from all over wrote to Schulze, asking his opinion on racial matters."[239] Schulze was also the impetus behind the creation of the Lutheran Human Relations Association of America (LHRAA) in 1953 (the group had met informally since 1945), the object of which was "the integration of blacks into existing white congregations."[240]

At the 1946 convention of the Synodical Conference, Schulze was elected a member of the missionary board. At the same convention, the delegates suggested the adoption (by the Synodical Conference) of black pastors and black congregations on the same terms and by the same means as other congregations and pastors: "That Negro congregations, pastors, and teachers in good standing be transferred by the Mission Board, upon request, to membership in the districts in which they are located."[241] More specifically, the Synodical Conference decided to place the entirety of its black ministry under the care and responsibility of the Missouri Synod, as they were the largest member of the conference and most involved with the black missions.[242]

The Missouri Synod adopted and implemented the recommendations of the Conference in 1947. However, integrating black pastors and congregations into the districts of the Missouri

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[238] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 194-195.
[239] Galchutt, *The Career of Andrew Schulze*, 127.
[240] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 199; Galchutt, *The Career of Andrew Schulze*, 127, 135.
[241] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 204; Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 29; Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America, *The Eighth General Conference of the Negro Churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America* (New Orleans: St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1946), 5; "Church Unity Move Okayed," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 10, 1946.
[242] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 198.

Synod (and under its district mission boards) did not necessitate integrating individual congregations. The synod merely took them in, but did not treat them as equals. Black pastors and laypeople within Missouri were "skeptical about the new policy and voiced serious reservations."[243] The General Conference had passed the measure with only a single vote before the official vote by the Missouri Synod occurred.[244] The white perspective can be summed up in the response to an address by Schulze in 1948 to the Northern Illinois District Mission Board.

> The board responded by reemphasizing its willingness "to do all in our power to help our (colored) brother to obtain and maintain his chapel and school in which he and his can worship as a colored congregation, but that it would not be wise at this time to compel 'white' congregations to take into membership colored Lutherans since in most sectors of our District this may still cause much harm."[245]

They were not willing to go all the way.

Nevertheless, after Addie Graves had shown up at Redeemer, the members of Redeemer voted in July 1952 to allow black members. After Pastor von Husen reported on the Florida-Georgia District convention, the members discussed "colored members" and voted that they "be admitted to our church services," sit in a special section, and "take communion after the last table of white members were serviced."[246] This was likely an uncomfortable time for Graves, since she was now the sole black member of a white Lutheran church.[247] She could have sought membership at a black church (African Methodist Episcopal, black Baptist, etc.) in Columbus, rather than endure a potentially uncomfortable introduction at a white church—the only one of its kind in the city. The reason she did not was because of her faith—she was "a devout

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[243] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 198.
[244] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 198-199.
[245] Galchutt, *The Career of Andrew Schulze*, 127.
[246] LCR Minutes, 45-46.
[247] Her husband John was serving at the time with the 60th Medical Base Depot Company in Korea. Funeral Notice for John Graves, Jr., *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, Monday, August 11, 1980, B-4; United States Department of the Army, *General Order Number 80, Battle Credits and Assault Landings for Korea* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1954).

Lutheran."[248] Addie Graves consciously sought out and successfully joined the only church in her town which aligned with her faith and religious tradition. For her, joining Redeemer was an easy decision—even with the risks and potential danger.[249]

One of the distinct characteristics of Lutheranism is the understanding of the Lord's Supper, or communion.[250] Like Roman Catholics, confessional Lutherans believe that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are truly present in the bread and wine consumed in the sacrament of communion. This explains the significance of the explicit mention of communion in the discussion about black members at Redeemer, and "allowing them to take communion after the last table of white members were serviced."[251] Their allowance of her presence was more significant at the time than their restriction of her participation. Some congregations, when allowing black presence, still did not allow full sacramental participation.[252] Perhaps some at Redeemer had reservations, too, as "one change was made about the colored members taking communion" at the next voters' meeting in October. That change is unknown.[253]

Graves, too, must have considered the possibility of her partaking of communion when searching for a church home in Columbus. Indeed, that was important to her; it was one of the last things she mentioned in a conversation with Reverend Bradley Arnholt months before her death in 2007.[254] Again, her background among black Lutherans in Wilcox County had a lasting effect on her. The rate of communion participation among black Lutherans in the 1920s was

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[248] Marshall, email.
[249] Daughters, interview.
[250] Pezzica devoted a chapter to communion. "The History and Theology," 51-54.
[251] LCR Minutes, 45-46.
[252] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 117-118.
[253] LCR Minutes, 47.
[254] It is "what all serious-minded faithful Lutherans are taught to do." Hoard, *The Truth Will Set You Free*, 31; Bradley P. Arnholt, "A Note from Rev. Bradley P. Arnholt," in Bethlehem Lutheran Church, *Bethlehem Lutheran Church 50th Anniversary, 1963-2013* (Columbus, GA: Bethlehem Lutheran Church).

higher than that of white Lutherans.[255] Lutheran adherence to "closed communion," the practice of only participating in the sacrament with others of the same confession and belief, is significant, and even if they remained partially segregated, the members of Redeemer acknowledged their belief in the importance of participation, even of black members.[256] Still, even though she had joined Redeemer, and Graves and her family were not fully accepted as a part of the congregation.

Apparently "an embarrassing situation had arisen" a year later.[257] At the quarterly meeting in January 1954, the voting members of Redeemer solidified their position on the "colored folk of the congregation" partaking of communion with the last table.[258] Possibly, black members – Graves or someone else – had partaken from the communion chalice before all the white members had done so.[259] In a still largely segregated society, sharing a drinking vessel, even in a religious ritual, could cause discomfort. This notion was partly behind the development of individual communion cups, a trend which started at the end of the nineteenth century after the American public became more aware of public health and sanitation.[260] In addition to sitting with her family in a separate area (in the balcony), Graves was required to partake of communion

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[255] Pezzica, "The History and Theology," 54.
[256] See Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "The One Eucharist for the One World," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 43, no. 2 (February, 1972): 94-108. It is also important to note that all of the early members of Redeemer were from other congregations (many in the North), and many had served or were currently actively serving in the military, which had already desegregated. "Lutheran Congregation's President Tells of Growth of Church Here," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 24, 1950.
[257] LCR Minutes, 61.
[258] LCR Minutes, 61.
[259] Rev. Samuel L. Hoard described an incident in which he participated in a communion service while visiting a church. A white couple, who "apparently had never shared the same altar and the same cup with a black Christian," was offended and "threatened to join another congregation." Hoard, *The Truth Will Set You Free*, 31.
[260] Betty A. O'Brien, "The Lords Supper: Traditional Cup of Unity or Innovative Cups of Individuality," *Methodist History* 32, no. 2 (January 1994): 79-98.

after the white members.[261] Her daughter could not receive catechism training at the church with the white students, and the pastor trained her at their home.[262]

While Graves was enduring racial prejudice locally, the Missouri Synod was confronting it on a national level. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision posed an "interesting challenge" to the Missouri Synod, including both membership and leadership. The decision, which forbade school segregation nationwide, sent shockwaves through the country, particularly in the South, where many whites perceived it as an attack on their way of life.[263] It "required many Americans to reevaluate their beliefs about segregation and discrimination."[264] "Wherever white people got together, one could be fairly certain that the talk was about this shocking ruling and how it could be evaded, avoided, or nullified."[265] The Georgia legislature criticized President Dwight Eisenhower and Supreme Court justices, and Georgia governor Marvin Griffin declared the court's decision null and void, while many legislators from Georgia signed the Southern Manifesto.[266] Though the synod still deemed segregation a social issue, many LCMS districts had allowed black pastors and congregations who had previously been part of the Synodical Conference to join their ranks. Now, however, "some feared black membership could threaten the church's viability," as they now felt pressure to internally integrate their congregations.[267] With this fear, and the overall uneasiness, the Florida-Georgia District sought new ways to "deal with integration and social ministry," as they called it.[268]

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[261] Daughters, interview; Marshall, email.
[262] Arnholt, "A Note."
[263] Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus," 13; Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 40.
[264] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 39.
[265] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 126.
[266] The Southern Manifesto was a document signed by one hundred and one national legislators from southern states who vowed to use "all lawful means" to reverse Supreme Court decisions on desegregation. "The Southern Manifesto," *Time Magazine*, March 26, 1956; Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 126.
[267] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 41; Johnson, *Black Christians*, 201.
[268] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 42.

Delegates to the 1954 Florida-Georgia District convention created the position of Executive Secretary of Missions and Church Extension, and in 1955 the district Board of Directors installed Reverend William von Spreckelsen in the positon.[269] With this new position district leaders hoped to coordinate "future mission work with available personnel and funds."[270] Since this was the district's first full-time position, it appeared that they were more sensitive to issues not just of mission direction and church growth, but also concerning race relations, since black missions were a large part of the board's function. The board also met with Dr. Karl Kurth, the Executive Secretary of the Synodical Conference, to discuss the recommendation that black mission congregations of the Synodical Conference be placed under the Missouri Synod's districts.[271]

The Missouri Synod at this time began to acknowledge and respond to the desegregation issue. For example, the International Lutheran Women's Missionary League withdrew its acceptance of an invitation to hold its 1955 convention in New Orleans because the city was still segregated.[272] In 1956, the Missouri Synod officially enacted a policy to integrate its congregations. Delegates to the St. Paul, Minnesota, convention, enacted a policy to integrate LCMS congregations. Resolution 26, "Race Relations in National and World-Wide Church Work," incorporated Memorial 409, "Establishment of Congregations on a Nonsegregated Basis," in which the delegates resolved that synod organizations:

> make no distinction, based upon race or color, in their entrance requirements or employment policies…[and work] for the elimination of discrimination, wherever it may exist, in community, city, state, nation and world.[273]

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[269] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 42. This position evidently was originally called "Executive Secretary of Missions and Stewardship." Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 37.
[270] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 42.
[271] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 42.
[272] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 41.
[273] Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1956, 757-759, quoted in Meyer, ed. *Moving Frontiers*, 406, and Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 41; CTCR, *Racism in the Church,* 24n60.

As lofty a goal as this may seem, the significance lies in the fact that the synod made the statement officially. This was the beginning of many synodical conferences, resolutions, and the creation of "new structures and policies aimed at addressing the problem in its midst."[274]

Meanwhile, Graves and other Columbus residents experienced and participated in the national Civil Rights Movement. In 1955, after Rosa Parks's arrest in Montgomery for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the Montgomery Bus Boycott.[275] The boycott ended in November 1956, when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the decision of the U.S. District Court in Montgomery, which deemed the Alabama and Montgomery bus segregation laws unconstitutional. The *Enquirer* reported on November 16, 1956, that the Georgia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention, meeting in Columbus, endorsed the end of the bus segregation in Montgomery. Endorsement was not the same as action, however, and they did nothing to help the situation in Columbus.[276] Black leaders in Columbus were greatly influenced in their inaction by the murder of Dr. Brewer on February 18, 1956.[277] Though some thought his assertiveness had been too much too soon for Columbus, his death certainly put a damper on civil rights progress in Columbus for the succeeding years.[278] Many of Columbus's African American professionals left town, "leaving a leadership vacuum within black community."[279] A.J. McClung, later mayor pro tempore of Columbus and civil rights leader, said that when Brewer "was killed you might say the head was removed. It took us some time to get reorganized."[280] If civil rights advocates were quiet, that was not the case for proponents of

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[274] CTCR, *Racism in the Church,* 21.
[275] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 127.
[276] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 2.
[277] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 2; Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus," 14.
[278] Ridenour, "Thomas H. Brewer," 2.
[279] Causey, "Carson McCullers' Columbus," 14.
[280] A. J. McClung, quoted in Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 2.

segregation, such as Columbus resident Richard W. Edmonds, who published two books in 1957 advocating for the continuance of segregation.[281]

In the midst of all this, other Columbus congregations were also dealing with racial issues. While activists were trying to desegregate white churches throughout the South, the pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Columbus, Robert McNeill, echoed the sentiments of Andrew Schulze, advocating for racial equality and social justice.[282] In 1957 he wrote a piece for *Look* magazine on segregation from a southern minister's perspective.[283] However, his congregation (led by a minority of the membership) ousted him in 1959.[284] The fact that a minority of the membership was able to force McNeill out indicates the political and racial climate of Columbus at the time. The clergy at nearby First Baptist Church had "refrained from 'speaking out' on racial developments," for "to do otherwise would make their positions 'untenable.'"[285]

More broadly, the Florida-Georgia District of the Missouri Synod experienced more changes as well. On January 1, 1958, the Florida-Georgia district gave full membership (and financial support) to three black congregations in Florida: Our Savior (Orlando), St. Paul (Amelia City) and Good Shepherd (Ft. Lauderdale). This was the first time black congregations "in the southeastern section of the old Southern District were accorded equal status in official church conventions."[286]

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[281] Richard W. Edmonds, *Foundation for Segregation* (Columbus, GA: Self-pub., 1957); Richard W. Edmonds, *Segregation Is It Justified?* (Columbus, GA: Muscogee Publishing Company, 1957).
[282] Richard Hyatt, *Return to the Water: The Story of First Baptist Church, Columbus, Georgia* (Macon, GA: Nurturing Faith, 2017), 92.
[283] Robert McNeill, *God Wills Us Free: The Ordeal of a Southern Minister* (New York: Hill and Wang), 138ff.
[284] Stephens, "The Standoff."
[285] Alan Anderson, *Journey of Grace: A History of First Baptist Church of Americus, Georgia* (Americus, GA: First Baptist Church, 2006), 144.
[286] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43.

The congregation of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer dedicated a new building at 4700 Armour Road on July 13, 1958. It was positioned here to be near the new Lindsay Creek Bypass, the "largest construction project undertaken in Muscogee County at that time" (though that project would not be completed until 1970).[287] Pastor Ahrendt led the morning service. The following Wednesday included an open house.[288] Because of the new building, Graves had to make new arrangements for her attendance on Sundays:

> A motion was made…to recommend to accept the offer of Mrs. Addie Graves (negro) to come in the ~~back door~~ fellowship hall [door] of the new church [and] sit in choir section and Pastor Welch to work out details to commune her privately.[289]

Apparently, she offered to enter through the side door, sit in the choir section (which was actually in the first few pews in the front of the church), and receive communion privately with Pastor Welch – an offer which the voting members accepted.[290] By the end of the year, Graves and her family also moved to a new building, a house in the East Carver Heights subdivision of Columbus, a new middle-class subdivision for black residents.[291]

After purchasing a home in November 1958, the Graves family moved to 1306 Vera Drive. Carver Heights was established by Edwin E. Farley in 1950 as a haven for African Americans, who had limited housing choices in segregated Columbus.[292] East Carver Heights was opened a few years later. Segregated housing was a serious issue, and served as a symbol of continuing racial prejudice on the part of white Columbus residents. In the late 1950s, the Ku

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[287] Margaret Laney Whitehead and Barbara Bogart, *City of Progress: A History of Columbus, Georgia* (Columbus, GA: Columbus Office Supply Co., 1978), 370.
[288] LCR Minutes, 142.
[289] The Redeemer Church Council discussed this at their meeting on January 2, 1958. LCR Minutes, 137 (strikethrough in original).
[290] The voting members of Redeemer accepted Graves's offer at their meeting on January 8, 1958. LCR Minutes, 139.
[291] "Realty Transfers in Muscogee County," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, November 7, 1958.
[292] Joyce Wade, "Carver Heights Subdivision," W*alking Through Black History,* Columbus State University Archives, April 3, 2017, http://digitalarchives.columbusstate.edu/16-carver-heights-subdivision.

Klux Klan and other white supremacists were still burning crosses in the yards of black residents. On July 1, 1958, they bombed the house of Essie Mae Ellison, a black woman who had recently moved into a previously all-white neighborhood, hours after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered a speech in Columbus.[293]

With an increase in segregation-related violence, and perhaps because they now had their own building (and therefore a more prominent public face in the community), some members of the congregation at Redeemer felt it was necessary to segregate their church even more. In October, 1959, one member moved that:

> Whereas it does not seem advisable or expedient to house or entertain gatherings of mixed races, and whereas recent happenings make it evident that it is highly inadvisable to have such meetings where it *may prove objectionable in the community*, be it resolved that we have gatherings where only members of the white race be invited to participate.[294]

No vote on the motion is listed in the church minutes, but at the next meeting Pastor Welch "asked for a peaceful release from Redeemer."[295] One can speculate why. This was not unique to Redeemer, as "local societal pressures" tended to negatively affect Lutheran openness to integration through the late 1950s.[296] Echoing the Tennessee Synod's resolution of 1866, the members of Redeemer wanted to "worship God with the least possible embarrassment."[297] The ambivalence of the Redeemer congregation, and in particular the way in which this one member bent to social pressure, reflects the general state of Columbus at the time. By the end of the 1950s, the South "was poised on the brink of a steep precipice that edged the region's great racial

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[293] Johnnie Warner and Richard Gardiner, "A Missing Chapter in the Martin Luther King Saga: His Speech in Columbus, Georgia, and the Bomb That Exploded Later That Night," *Muscogiana* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 7-16; Aaron Gerald Guest, Sr. "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Speech in Columbus, Georgia, and its Effect on the Local Civil Rights Movement," *Muscogiana* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 6.
[294] LCR Minutes, 168 (my emphasis).
[295] LCR Minutes, 175.
[296] Kathryn M. Galchutt, "Lutherans and the Civil Rights Struggle in Selma," *Journal of the Lutheran Historical Conference* (2014): 12.
[297] Quoted in Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 24-25.

divide."[298] Graves, according to one story, felt so unsafe during this period that she kept a revolver in her purse when attending Redeemer.[299] While that story cannot be substantiated, by 1961, Graves was listed as "inactive" on the membership roll of Redeemer.

After the calamities of the previous years, by 1960, Columbus could be characterized "as a place of 'great social rest.'"[300] "[T]here was little legacy left of Brewer's leadership and activism of the 1940s."[301] That changed slightly in 1961 with the Freedom Rides. After the bus boycotts of 1955-1956, and the successful desegregation of busses and bus facilities through legislation, groups such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) began testing the new situation by riding interstate busses through the South during the summer of 1961. The *Columbus Enquirer* covered some of the freedom rider activity and Columbus civil rights activity increased as a result.[302] This time, however, even though outsiders were responsible for most of the activity, some local people were also involved.[303] Some readers of the local newspaper wrote in with pro-segregation opinions. The author of one article, printed May 16, 1961, asked for both sides of the segregation issue. The author said the attacks on the busses in Alabama were wrong, but only because the violence "makes those who inflict [violence] almost as bad as those who invite it."[304] The author opposed violence as a solution, but did not see segregation as a problem.[305] In June 1961, the *Enquirer* reported multiple instances of freedom

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[298] Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 133.
[299] Edwin T. Harkey, email message to author, November 19, 2018.
[300] Quoted in Causey, "McCullers' Columbus," 14.
[301] Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 144.
[302] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 5.
[303] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 4-5.
[304] "Senseless Expedition of Bus-Riders Cannot Serve Any Purpose," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, May 16, 1961, 5.
[305] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 6.

riders passing through Columbus "without incident," even receiving service at a lunch counter at the Greyhound Bus terminal.[306]

Some think that the movement "did not seem to have established a strong foothold in Columbus," citing lack of evidence.[307] The civil rights movement resurfaced in Columbus in June 1961, when some Columbus residents were involved in a petition to end bus segregation in the city. Even if the Greyhound terminal had apparently desegregated, city busses in Columbus remained segregated. A number of citizens, including the Nonpartisan Voters League, the Muscogee County Registration Council, a citizens' committee, and some local black residents, filed a petition on June 20, requesting desegregated seating on Columbus busses. People, including college students, responded by orchestrating a bus sit-in. Organized by Rudy Allen, a group of people interested in nonviolent training met at the ninth street YMCA. After a preparation meeting, they scattered in groups of three throughout the city at various bus stops. When they boarded busses, they sat in the front of the bus, in the area traditionally reserved for white riders. After getting arrested, one group called on Albert Thompson, a prominent African American lawyer in Columbus.[308] Some have argued that the attitudes of political leaders in Columbus "virtually mirrored those of the local population," but it is more accurate to say those political attitudes mirrored those of the local *white* population.[309] As activism increased, Georgia politicians increasingly saw desegregation as an imminent threat. In the 1962 gubernatorial race, Lieutenant Governor Garland Bird "called on Georgians never to surrender to race mixing."[310]

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[306] "'Riders' Pass Through City Without Incident," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 2, 1961.
[307] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 5.
[308] Bunky Clark, in Thompson, *Can Two Walk Together?*
[309] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 7.
[310] "Segregation and Honesty Theme song for '62 Race," *Augusta Chronicle* (Augusta, GA), June 11, 1961.

With all this in mind, and probably at the suggestion of their new pastor, John P. Ellwanger, who understood "the challenge that [Redeemer] present[ed]," the church council of Redeemer, meeting on June 27, 1962, recommended "that the possibility of starting a colored church in the Carver Heights area be studied."[311] The motion carried at the voters' meeting the next month.[312] By the end of 1962, Addie and John Graves were living in a middle-class subdivision with a mortgage and a daughter. With her husband serving overseas much of the time, Graves had sought out and attended the only Lutheran church in Columbus, Georgia for nearly a decade – a decade that included dramatic racial tensions. While she experienced racism and discrimination, because of her strong faith she held on. She must also have had a strong resolve. She was "[n]either a radical activist…nor a passive complicitor," but a determined, dedicated woman secure in her Lutheran identity. When the opportunity came to help start a Lutheran mission on her end of town, Graves was eager to help.[313]

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[311] John P. Ellwanger to Lutheran Church of the Redeemer President, January 20, 1962, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer Archives; LCR Minutes, 208. At Ellwanger's installation in March 1962, his brother Rev. Joseph W. Ellwanger brought a black guest, Rev. Will L. Herzfeld (pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama from 1960-1965), whose presence "raised the ire of a handful of the members of Redeemer." Joseph W. Ellwanger, email message to author, April 5, 2018.

[312] LCR Minutes, typed loose-leaf between 208 and 209.

[313] Daughters, interview.

Chapter Four: Bethlehem Lutheran Church

Addie Graves's experience of racial discrimination at Redeemer, even after the Missouri Synod officially changed its policy (1956), and reminded its membership of that change (1959), was in no way unusual. After the 1956 resolution, the synod allowed for a "local option," meaning that congregations could decide for themselves whether to integrate.[314] Even after the 1959 resolution, aimed at "the eradication of such racial or ethnic antipathies as may still persist in our midst," some congregations still held on to a policy of segregation.[315] At the 1962 Synodical Convention in Cleveland, delegates "resolved to confront congregations that did not follow Scriptural exhortations to serve all regardless of race or social status."[316] Redeemer in Columbus chose to address the issue by recommending a study of "the possibility of starting a colored church in Carver Heights."[317] Addie Graves was eager "to bring a lot of spiritual food" to her old neighborhood, and may have given the initial suggestion for the location (though she could not vote at church meetings).[318]

Again, the situation in Columbus was not unique. Southern districts of the LCMS (e.g., the Southern District and Florida-Georgia District) took longer than other districts to accept integration.[319] For example, the Southern District officially integrated in 1963, and even then it

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[314] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 203.
[315] "Combating Racial Discrimination." *Proceedings*, Res. 12, 315-317, reprinted in George J. Gude, "The Church in Society," in August R. Suelflow, ed., *Heritage in Motion: Readings in The History of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1962-1995* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998), 266.
[316] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 42; "To Call Attention to and to Emphasize the Synod's Resolution on Race Relations," Resolution 7-07, Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Proceedings* (St. Louis: Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1962), 129. This convention was happening (June 20-29, 1962) while Redeemer was looking to start a church in Carver Heights (June 27, 1962; see Chapter 3).
[317] LCR Minutes, typed loose-leaf between 208 and 209.
[318] Robert H. Collins to F. Geneva Jones, April 21, 1984, Bethlehem Lutheran Church Archives, Columbus, Georgia; Daughters, interview. She could not vote, not only because she was African American, but also because Redeemer did not allow for women to vote until 1970.
[319] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 42.

took action by Attorney General Robert Kennedy to open the Pensacola Naval Air Station chapel for its meeting.[320] Redeemer in Columbus, in suggesting a black mission church, was following the example of other churches in the Florida-Georgia District.[321] The district was following the synod's instruction to "serve all, regardless of race or nationality."[322] However, "developing congregations in black communities was difficult because there were no black pastors in the [district] and very few in [the LCMS]."[323]

To create their new black mission in Columbus, the Florida-Georgia District in August 1963 assigned Robert H. Collins as a missionary-at-large to plant a Synodical Conference mission "in the black community of Columbus."[324] Collins was born on July 10, 1934, in Chicago, and received much of his education there before graduating from Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, in 1963. He was ordained on August 11, 1963, at Atonement Lutheran Church in Atlanta, Georgia.[325] With Reverend William Jones, a black pastor with a mission in Jacksonville, Florida, and other black pastors, Collins "successfully admonished [district] membership to include blacks in the ministry and in District activities."[326]

After years of faithfully attending the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Graves transferred her family to the yet-to-be-formed Bethlehem congregation.[327] In fact, she was the

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[320] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 205; Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 42.
[321] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43.
[322] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 44.
[323] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43.
[324] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 65; Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 80, 372; Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984. Collins was one of the first black students to matriculate at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois.
[325] Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Biographical Dictionary*, 5; Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *25th Anniversary*.
[326] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, xi; Jones was pastor at Atonement Lutheran Church in Atlanta when Collins was ordained there, and oversaw the merger between Atonement and St. Mark Lutheran Church started by Bakke as a mission congregation in Atlanta in 1917. Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43. Jones had also previously served as a missionary in Alabama.
[327] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43; Graves' was not a "stoic acceptance" of powerlessness while at Redeemer, as was the case with other African Americans (Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma*, 301-302). No longer welcome there, when the opportunity arose for a different option, she acted.

only member at first.[328] In a sort of "new experiment," the district planned to build a church facility before adding members.[329] While the district handled the construction of a building, Graves helped Collins canvass the area in an effort to add to Bethlehem's membership. She was one of "four key people who built the church," and her husband, John, converted to Lutheranism about this time as well.[330] He attended one of the first confirmation classes that Reverend Collins held in his home.[331] She probably suggested the Lutheran Women's Missionary League as a funding source for new worship materials: a baptismal font, vases for the altar, and various linens.[332]

Addie Graves did not refer to her transfer to Bethlehem as a rejection by Redeemer, but focused on evangelization in the neighborhood around Bethlehem.[333] Instead, she was happy to join Bethlehem because it felt more like home for her.[334] This reflects the attitudes of other former residents of Wilcox County.[335] LaRue Lawson joined Bethlehem after reading a newspaper article about the church "going up in the Black community. She held on to her Lutheranism (as did Mrs. Graves), even when there was not a church to welcome her."[336] They were more familiar with the surroundings of black Lutherans in which they had grown up.

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[328] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43, 80; Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984. Graves was not unique in being the sole charter member of a black church in the Florida-Georgia District. Rachel Lee helped form Our Savior church in Orlando, Florida, in the late 1950s. Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 43-44.

[329] Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984.

[330] Robert H. Collins to members of Bethlehem, February 11, 2013, in *Bethlehem Lutheran Church 50th Anniversary*.

[331] Marshall, email.; Daughters, interview; Rutledge, "50 Year"; Lydia McCullough, interview with author, April 14, 2018.

[332] Graves was a long-time member of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML); Robert H. Collins to Mrs. Berk, July 4, 1964, in Geneva Jones, "A History of Bethlehem Lutheran Church," scrapbook, 1984, Bethlehem Lutheran Church Archives.

[333] Gailes, interview.

[334] Daughters, interview.

[335] Bea, quoted in McCarty, *The Reins of Power*, 12.

[336] Edwin T. Harkey, "The History of Bethlehem Church, 1964-1989," in Bethlehem Lutheran Church 25th Anniversary program, Bethlehem Lutheran Church Archives; Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984.

Collins helped Bethlehem grow in its first years by visiting those who were absent on a Sunday to speak with them.[337] This kind of encouragement typified the pastors of black Lutheran mission congregations.[338]

With Reverend Collins's coordination, the Florida-Georgia District bought property at Seventeenth Avenue and Murray Street through the United States Urban Renewal Development Board.[339] The location, at the easternmost end of the Bottoms, the site of the first urban renewal project of the Housing Authority of Columbus (completed in 1963), near Shepherd Place (which the city redeveloped in the 1960s), may not have been ideal ("a matter of the mission board not thinking"), but the building was a positive addition to the area.[340] Brown Nicholson, Jr., assistant executive director of the Housing Authority of Columbus, sent accolades to von Spreckelsen: "The building itself has already made a considerable contribution to the esthetics of the urban renewal project…it will make a much greater contribution to the neighborhood and the city as a whole."[341] St. Benedict the Moor, a Roman Catholic mission to the black community, had also just been established in the area the previous year.

Although by this time the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer had been around for two decades, the Lutheran presence in Columbus remained very small, and Columbus residents were still not familiar with Lutheranism. Outside of areas like central Alabama, African Americans, if they had even heard of it, saw Lutheranism as "a white denomination."[342] In its location, Bethlehem would have seemed "a white denomination in a nonwhite community."[343] Pastor

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[337] Daughters, interview.
[338] e.g., Krenke, "Out of the Blocks."
[339] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 65.
[340] Whitehead and Bogart, *City of Progress*, 294; Edwin T. Harkey to Victor Belton, March 3, 1992, Bethlehem Lutheran Church Archives.
[341] Quoted in Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 80.
[342] Collins to Jones; Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 124.
[343] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 124.

Collins later wrote, "I can recall when the church was going up, and the man in front of me said, 'Lucifer Church, Lucifer Church,' and I said, 'No, Lutheran Church, a Christian Church.'"[344] Collins "[cleared] up the mishap."[345] Other locals were interested in whether Bethlehem was a Lutheran Methodist or Lutheran Baptist church.[346]

When the members dedicated their facility at 621 17th Avenue on March 15, 1964, Reverend Theodore Ahrendt delivered the sermon for the occasion.[347] With the building still under construction, people from the neighborhood were impressed to see a church erected without having to sell bricks to raise funds: "[P]eople came up and said, 'How can you build a church without selling bricks?' Nobody believed Bethlehem would last."[348] The neighborhood around Bethlehem soon became quite accustomed to the Lutheran presence.

After the initial creation of Bethlehem, its membership grew slowly.[349] For the first decade, only about a dozen actual members attended, but they spread the word and brought their neighbors and friends.[350] In his end-of-year report to the district missionary board for 1963, Collins wrote in the "comments" section, "I hope our picture is not too dim for you, but we are a new congregation just beginning to organize."[351] If he felt uncomfortable about the district administration perceiving his membership numbers as lackluster, he would also have felt out of place at district meetings. In April, 1964, he joined Pastor John Ellwanger and two laymen of Redeemer at the biennial convention of the Florida-Georgia District in Miami Beach. But while

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[344] Robert Collins to members of Bethlehem, February 11, 2013, in Bethlehem Lutheran Church, *50th Anniversary*.
[345] Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984.
[346] Collins to Jones; Harkey, "The History of Bethlehem Church, 1964-1989."
[347] "Bethlehem Lutheran Church Dedicated," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, March 17, 1964. Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, *25th Anniversary*, 1965.
[348] Robert Collins to members of Bethlehem, February 11, 2013, in Bethlehem Lutheran Church, *50th Anniversary*.
[349] Olivia Rutledge, "The 50 Year Historical Journey of Bethlehem Lutheran Church," in Bethlehem Lutheran Church, *50th Anniversary*.
[350] Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984.
[351] "1963 Education Survey Report," Bethlehem Lutheran Church Archives.

the members and pastor of Redeemer were serving as delegates, he was only allowed to attend. While black pastors of Synodical Conference missions in other regions had applied for and gained admission as members of LCMS districts, that was not yet the case for some in Florida-Georgia.

This was an eventful time for the beginning of a black Lutheran mission in Columbus, as during the 1960s Columbus experienced many changes that made the city more integrated. In the fall of 1963, John Townsend enrolled at Columbus College, becoming the first black student to attend that institution. He held an active role at the school, serving on the Student Government Association.[352] Two black pastors requested that the city "desegregate public facilities, remove all segregation laws from the books…and accept qualified Negroes as city employees."[353] Other black residents requested the desegregation of county parks.[354] A few churches, such as First Baptist Church, integrated as well.[355] Robert Leonard became one of the two first black students admitted to Baker High School in 1965, later becoming the first black student to graduate from a white public school in Columbus. Leonard later recalled the feelings he had "walking those hallways – surrounded but isolated – forced into talking to myself, answering myself – having myself as my friend and ally."[356] This was Addie Graves's feeling while she was at Redeemer – surrounded by Lutherans, yet isolated by her skin color. Now, at Bethlehem, she truly felt at home.[357]

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[352] John W. Townsend, Jr., Extraordinary Courage: My Life on the Columbus College Campus (1963-1965) (John W. Townsend, Jr., 2013).
[353] "Desegregation of City Facilities is Requested," *Columbus Enquirer*, May 14, 1963.
[354] "Negroes Ask Park Action," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, March 17, 1964.
[355] Hyatt, *Return to the Water*, 92.
[356] Mayor's Commission, *Black Pioneers*.
[357] Daughters, interview; Gailes, interview; Marshall, email.

Some members of Bethlehem participated in civil rights activities, including marching with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., although Addie and John Graves did not.[358] Beginning in March 1965, the *Enquirer* reported on the voting rights march in Selma. Since the mid-1950s, locals had blamed outsiders for much of the civil rights activity in Columbus—though this impression might be due to a lack of coverage by the *Enquirer*.[359] But even if it were the case that the "attitudes, activities and turmoil in Alabama did not exist in Columbus," that did not mean that Columbus residents were not involved.[360] Addie and John were not actively involved in the civil rights movement, but they knew people who were. Certainly, their close proximity to Selma while growing up gave them a strong feeling of participation, even if they were not directly involved in the activity of 1965. Addie frequently exchanged weekends at each other's homes with her friend Izola Gailes, who lived in Arlington in Wilcox County, Alabama. John's brother Cornelius Graves was a civil rights leader in the Boiling Spring community of Wilcox County (near Catherine), and participated in marches.[361] Additionally, Joseph Ellwanger, the brother of John Ellwanger, pastor of Redeemer in Columbus, was directly involved in civil rights activity in Selma.[362]

With John away in Vietnam, Addie and her daughters likely helped with the clothing drives sponsored by Bethlehem and the new congregation of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church for Vietnamese refugees. The two congregations collected over one hundred pounds of clothing.[363] Pastor John Ellwanger developed the "mission congregation" located nearer to Fort

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[358] Arnholt, "A Note;" Daughters, interview.
[359] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 9 and 15.
[360] Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 9.
[361] Gailes, interview; Marshall, email. See Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma* for much more about civil rights activity in Wilcox County.
[362] Galchutt, "Lutherans and the Civil Rights Struggle in Selma," 27.
[363] Prahlow, *Fields to Harvest*, 81.

Benning in 1966, to be more convenient for soldiers.[364] Prince of Peace Lutheran Church was organized on January 16, 1966, and Pastor Collins of Bethlehem spoke at the opening service.[365] This church was recognized as a daughter church of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, as it was set up through different means than Bethlehem, whereas Bethlehem was specifically a black mission church.[366] The first resident pastor of Prince of Peace was Reverend Thomas R. Zehnder, who had been a missionary in Japan. Partly because of the Army presence, Prince of Peace was integrated and "very diverse" from the beginning. Bethlehem also had military members, especially during the war (before the creation of Prince of Peace, Bethlehem had been the closest Lutheran church to Fort Benning). But Prince of Peace had a larger congregation, and was a stand-alone parish—not a mission church. Nevertheless, members of all three LCMS congregations continually interacted and cooperated. Graves and her daughters attended joint worship services at Redeemer and at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church during the 1960s.[367]

The late 1960s marked the beginning of a strengthened and renewed black identity within the Missouri Synod. In 1966, Reverend Will L. Herzfield became the first black pastor to serve in an executive capacity for the LCMS when he became an executive with the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A.[368] In 1967, a group of black pastors met at the Lutheran Church of Christ the King in Chicago and formed the Black Lutheran Clergy Caucus of Missouri.[369] The following year, in 1968, black pastors from the Missouri Synod met with black pastors from two other Lutheran church bodies and formed the Association of Black Lutheran Clergymen (ABLC). This group,

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[364] Mion, "Strangers in the Land," 8; Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 68.
[365] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 68; "New Lutheran Church Groundbreaking Set," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, October 26, 1968.
[366] Ahrendt, *Lutherans in Georgia*, 68; Mion, "Strangers in the Land," 8.
[367] Daughters, interview.
[368] "Will Herzfeld, AELC Presiding Bishop, Rights Activist, Dies," *News and Events, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, May 10, 2002, https://www.elca.org/News-and-Events/4571; Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 205.
[369] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 205.

which soon changed its name to the Association of Black Lutheran Churchmen, "sensitized the Lutheran churches to the needs of African-American Lutherans and paved the way for various denominational African-American caucuses."[370] In 1969, Herzfield became the first black pastor elected to the Mission Board of the Missouri Synod, continuing the trend of greater inclusion for blacks in synod leadership, and black organization in Christianity across the nation.[371] That trend was recognized when the LCMS passed a resolution, "To Affirm Legitimacy of Black Power," at the 1969 convention.

One of the clauses of the 1969 resolution reads, "WHEREAS, God in His mercy knows also the need and hunger of every man for that secular dignity, honor, and capacity for self-respect which Luther lists as belonging to 'daily bread.'"[372] Luther's list includes:

> Everything that belongs to the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.[373]

Pastor Collins had that in mind quite often, as the name of the church, "Bethlehem," means "house of bread," and was chosen "with the intent of that congregation to bring a lot of spiritual food into the area…without partiality."[374] When Columbus held a public tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., after his assassination in April 1968, Pastor Collins called for peace:[375]

> He was a great leader but now we have to work a lot harder for racial harmony. We can't say "forget it" because we've lost a great leader. We have to be willing to do a lot more, not just for King's sake but for the love of Christ.[376]

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[370] Echols, "Lutheranism," 1668.
[371] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 205; "Blacks Organize Units in Churches," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, August 17, 1968.
[372] "To Affirm Legitimacy of Black Power," *Proceedings*, 1969, Res. 9-22, 148, in Suelflow, ed., *Heritage in Motion*, 268.
[373] Paul Timothy McCain et al, eds., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 335.
[374] Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984.
[375] "Citywide Services Set for Dr. King on Sunday," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 6, 1968; Tjofat, "Some Key Events," 14-15.
[376] "Citywide Services Set for Dr. King on Sunday," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, April 6, 1968.

Collins emphasized that people should work harder rather than panic or feel defeated. It was fitting, then, that in 1968 Bethlehem officially became a member of the LCMS.[377] The 1969 convention resolution also stated "[t]hat the Synod…affirm [sic] that such a mission of its black members to their own communities in no way divides the church but only recognizes and uses the variety of the gifts with which Christ has blessed the whole body of its members."[378] Bethlehem was now, after Addie Graves's first ten years of patient struggle at Redeemer, a legitimate, recognized, and equal member church of the Missouri Synod.

The next few years were full of changes for Graves. Her daughter, also named Addie, graduated from Carver High School in 1970, and left to attend college in Atlanta in 1973.[379] From March through August 1970, Rebecca Graves, the daughter of John's brother Cornelius, lived with Addie and John in Columbus after she graduated from Alabama State University in Montgomery. Although her father had become a Baptist, Rebecca "was greatly influenced" during her time in Columbus to join the Lutheran Church. She credits "Addie as being the person that influenced me to join the Lutheran Church." When she moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Rebecca joined a local Lutheran church there.[380] A few years later, Graves would introduce Rebecca to Frank Marshall, who took over pastoral duties at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Arlington, Alabama, after the death of Samuel Gailes in 1972.[381] John Graves retired from the

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[377] Prince of Peace had been added to the district roster immediately after its formation in 1966; "A Brief History of Bethlehem," in Geneva Jones, "A History of Bethlehem Lutheran Church."

[378] "To Affirm Legitimacy of Black Power," *Proceedings*, 1969, Res. 9-22, 148, in Suelflow, ed., *Heritage in Motion*, 268.

[379] Daughters, interview.

[380] Marshall, email.

[381] Marshall, email; Gailes, interview; Frank Marshall's brother, Marshall, also a pastor, was involved in the events in Selma. Marshall, email.

Army in 1971, and attended Columbus Technical College to start a second career as a mechanic.[382]

Bethlehem had become a community church, and invited local organizations to utilize its building. In 1972, it was the fastest growing church in the area. Pastor Collins distributed a "Neighborhood Newsletter" that "dealt with community concerns" to four hundred homes in the area.[383] Though he had done great things, and helped to establish a thriving Lutheran congregation in a black residential area of Columbus, Reverend Collins left Bethlehem in 1972. He then earned his Master of Divinity at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1975, and became one of the first African American faculty members at Concordia Theological Seminary, in Fort Wayne, Indiana. While there, he reviewed books about evangelism and mission work, evidencing his traditional Lutheran perspective.

Changes were happening within the black ministry of the Missouri Synod as well. In 1973, the Missouri Synod created the Black Lutheran Centennial Committee.[384] In 1975, "after persistent urging" on the part of black members, the Missouri Synod adopted a Black Mission Models Task force to assess the efficacy of their black ministry.[385] In 1976 a Convocation of Black Lutherans met in New Orleans, becoming the "first such convocation to be called since" the Missouri Synod took over the black missions previously under the care and supervision of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America.[386] All of these meetings culminated with centennial celebrations in 1977 and the publication of Richard C. Dickinson's *Roses and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Missions and Ministry in The*

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[382] "Vo-Tech School Honors Students," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, January 27, 1971, 2; Daughters, interview.
[383] Collins to Jones, April 21, 1984.
[384] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 205.
[385] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 204; Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 205.
[386] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 205.

Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its supplement, the *Biographical Dictionary of Black Lutheran Clergymen* in 1978. The *Dictionary* was also meant as a resource for interested congregations "to select speakers for the Black Lutheran Rallies."[387] Both books were meant to facilitate conversation, as the authors behind the *Dictionary* hoped that "discussions could be held" within the synod regarding black members and black outreach possibilities.[388] Discussions were held on an official level as well – the LCMS adopted twenty-three resolutions dealing with integration or black ministry between 1975 and 1986.[389]

With all the positive action happening within the LCMS regarding the black ministry, racial disparity could still be felt. Pastor Thomas Zehnder, the Pastor of Prince of Peace, helped Bethlehem during its period with a pastoral vacancy, and in 1975, he led the members of Bethlehem to call Reverend Glen A. Sea to fill the vacancy. Sea was a Seminex pastor.[390] Since the New Orleans Convention of 1973, the synod had been "in great turmoil."[391] Theological disagreements (namely, a battle between theological conservatives and modernists) at Concordia Seminary, in St. Louis, the Missouri Synod's flagship institution, led to a Seminary in Exile in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Seminex).[392] Even the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* included an article about disunity in the Missouri Synod during this period.[393] However, the "Black Ministry (for the most part) was to be untouched as plans moved forward to gain equality within what was considered a white man's church organization."[394] Many black Lutherans felt that it "was not

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[387] Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Biographical Dictionary*, iii.
[388] Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, *Biographical Dictionary*, iv.
[389] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 206.
[390] Rutledge, "50 Year;" Glen A. Sea to members of Bethlehem, February 27, 2013, in *Bethlehem Lutheran Church 50th Anniversary*.
[391] Shrader, "Black Theology and History," 23.
[392] See, e.g., Kurt E. Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion: Missouri in Lutheran Perspective*, Concordia Seminary Monograph Series, no. 3 (Fort Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1977).
[393] "Lutheran Church's 'Peace' is Only on the Surface," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 25, 1977.
[394] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*.

their battle," yet it led to some black Lutheran pastors to affiliate with other, more liberal Lutheran denominations.[395] Some would argue that had Bethlehem been a mainstream congregation (i.e., not a black ministry congregation), the "anomaly" of a Seminex pastor probably would not have happened.[396] Then again, the acceptance of a Seminex pastor shows how mainstream Bethlehem was. The Seminex issue itself was a continuation, or result, of progressivism in the church, and the conservative response, or backlash, to it was similar to that of the mindset of the Old Lutherans in the mid-nineteenth century.[397]

During Pastor Sea's seven years at Bethlehem, the congregation "experienced significant growth in membership, stewardship, and witness to Jesus Christ."[398] Pastor Sea confirmed Graves's daughter Felecia.[399] He also conducted the funeral for Graves's husband John on August 11, 1980.[400] John was buried in the Main Post Cemetery at Fort Benning, with full military honors.[401] Due to a decrease in membership related to military downsizing after the Vietnam War, Prince of Peace closed in 1981.[402] With the closure, members transferred variously to Redeemer, Bethlehem, or St. Matthew, an LCA church founded in Columbus in 1956.[403] With this demographic change, and having lost Pastor Collins, it could be said that at this time Bethlehem ceased being a "black church," although they still reported to the Executive Director of the Commission on Black Ministry of the LCMS for a few more years.[404] After

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[395] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 204.
[396] Shrader, "Black Theology and History," 23.
[397] Marquart, *Anatomy of an Explosion*, 1-7.
[398] Glen A. Sea to members of Bethlehem, February 27, 2013, in *Bethlehem Lutheran Church 50th Anniversary, 1963-2013*.
[399] Izola Gailes was her godmother. Gailes, interview; Daughters, interview.
[400] Daughters, interview; "John Graves, Jr.," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, August, 8, 1980; "Funeral Notices," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, August 11, 1980.
[401] "John Graves, Jr.," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, August, 8, 1980; "Funeral Notices," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, Monday, August 11, 1980.
[402] Mion, "Strangers in the Land," 8.
[403] The history of this church forms a large part of Mion, "Strangers in the Land."
[404] Edwin T. Harkey to Richard C. Dickinson, March 21, 1988, Bethlehem Lutheran Church Archives.

Pastor Sea left in 1982 he was replaced by Reverend Carl Lampitt, who served until 1986. The congregation continued to remain involved in the LCMS's black ministry programs by financially supporting Concordia College in Selma. Members of Bethlehem also continued to be involved in civil rights activity, allowing the church to be used as a meeting place for the junior NAACP.[405]

The Atlanta West Zone of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League (of which Graves was a member) chose "structural repairs at Bethlehem, Columbus," as one of their District Mission Projects for 1982.[406] Unfortunately, in July 1983, someone firebombed Bethlehem and two neighboring predominantly black churches.[407] Authorities avoided early speculation of Klan association.[408] Witnesses saw two African American men with Molotov cocktails, although police made no arrests.[409] Pastor Lampitt held worship services outside until the interior could be cleaned up. After repairs and some renovations, the church held a rededication service the following year.[410]

After Pastor Lampitt left in 1986, the district called Reverend Edwin Harkey as missionary-at-large to serve Bethlehem for a five-year term. During his tenure, a group of black pastors presented the idea for a black worship resource hymnal. Hymns and hymn books have been important throughout Lutheran history, but white Lutherans had used them in an attempt to convert the culture as well as the religious identity of their black mission field. For example, for

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[405] e.g., "Junior NAACP Meets Saturday," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, June 17, 1983.
[406] "Atlanta West Zone Fall Rally," November 6, 1982, in Geneva Jones, "A History of Bethlehem Lutheran Church."
[407] Tim Chitwood, "Damaged Church Has Service Outside," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, July 4, 1983.
[408] Jerome Walters, "No Suspects Yet in Church Fires," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, July 6, 1983.
[409] Jerome Walters and Kathy Trimarco, "Second Man Sought in Church Arson," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, July 12, 1983.
[410] "Insurance Firm Helps Firebombed Churches," *Columbus Daily Enquirer*, August 13, 1983; Bethlehem Lutheran Church 25th Anniversary Program, Bethlehem Lutheran Church Archives.

many years the missionary board of the Synodical Conference did not allow black congregations to sing hymns not found in *The Lutheran Hymnal*.[411] In 1999, the Missouri Synod partnered with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) to create *Thus Far by Faith: An African American Resource for Worship*—a resource for black Lutherans by black Lutherans.[412] This was one of the most significant signs of black Lutheran autonomy since the creation of the Alpha Synod in the 1870s. The hymnal committee, which included Ulmer Marshall, sent surveys to black Lutheran congregations during the process of development, and to determine whether the project should result in a supplement or a full hymnal. Bethlehem's parishioners freely gave their input; they liked the idea of a supplement rather than a hymnal because they could not afford to purchase a new set of hymnals. Ultimately, the Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations decided that no LCMS congregations should use the hymnal, citing theological errors. In the end, while many black Lutheran congregations still went with *Thus Far by Faith*, the congregation at Bethlehem chose not to use it. That decision – to not defy synod directives, especially for theological reasons – shows how conservative the members of Bethlehem were, Addie Graves included.

Harkey served Bethlehem from 1987 until 1992, after which "the congregation felt that Bethlehem had no support from our district with helping to keep our congregation intact."[413] Indeed, at the end of Harkey's five-year mission, the district ended mission subsidy monies for Bethlehem and he took a call to another congregation. Knowing of the circumstances, Reverend Victor Belton and Reverend L. James Brooks, black pastors from the Atlanta area, served Bethlehem twice a month. For a time, Pastor Brooks and his wife commuted every Sunday

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[411] Johnson, *Black Christians*, 195.
[412] *This Far by Faith: An African American Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999).
[413] Rutledge, "50 Year."

morning and stayed all day "to visit members, as well as non-members, who were sick, in nursing homes, or rehabs [sic] centers not even in our city; he also visited people in the community."[414] Belton and Brooks exemplified the spirit of those earlier champions of Lutheran black ministry.

After Pastor Brooks finally left Bethlehem in November 1998, the Reverend Carl Peterson, pastor at Redeemer at the time, assisted the congregation in getting a new part-time pastor, Reverend Brad Arnholt, to take over Bethlehem in 2001. As part of a remodel in 2001, the members of Bethlehem hung a portrait of Addie Graves in the fellowship hall to honor her dedication and years of service.[415] The picture remains there to this day.

Addie Graves died in 2007, and Pastor Arnholt officiated her funeral. He had asked her months before her death, "Do you have any hard feelings toward the congregation at Redeemer?" She replied, "Pastor, you have it wrong. That church fed us. They preached the Gospel; baptized my children, taught them God's Word and gave us Holy Communion." She said she had "no ill will; I have nothing but thanksgiving for their faithfulness."[416]

Addie Graves's story fits in the context of Columbus, Georgia, which from the unrest of the 1960s through the 1980s, experienced sweeping changes, including a relaxation of its stringent segregation policies and norms. In the broader context of the story, by assisting in the founding of Bethlehem in 1963 she was continuing a heritage of black Lutherans over a century old—not just from her own childhood in Alabama, but a wider movement of black Lutherans asserting their influence and claiming their identity. She was also asserting her conservative Lutheran identity. She became Lutheran because of a history and heritage of black Lutherans in

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[414] Rutledge, "50 Year."
[415] For many years she drove to the florist for fresh flowers to place on the altar on Sunday mornings. Gailes, interview.
[416] Arnholt, "A Note."

America. She grew up in the milieu of theologically conservative black Lutherans in central Alabama, brought about by Rosa Young and Nils Bakke. She is still remembered for her strong Lutheran faith. Her dedication to her traditional, theologically conservative Lutheran faith and identity was strong enough for her to attend and join Redeemer. She likely did not think of herself "as a trailblazer."[417] But she was an unsung hero. She did not get arrested for protesting. She did not shift her allegiance to another, more liberal Lutheran synod. She continued in the faith of her childhood because she wanted to, and she did not let adversity stop her.

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[417] Hoard, *The Truth Will Set You Free*, 26.

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ADDIE GRAVES (1922-2007) AND THE CREATION OF BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH IN COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

A thesis submitted to the College of Letters and Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

by

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